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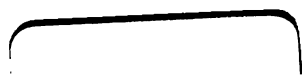
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REGENERATION.

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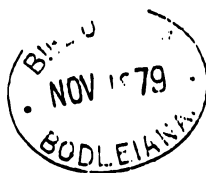
REGENERATION:

ITS CONDITIONS AND METHODS.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

COMPARATIVE Theology is certain to extend its influence from systems to doctrines. Analysis becomes more difficult the more minute the distinctions of thought and shades of opinion.

This essay has been intended to be simple and interesting, as well as instructive and suggestive.

Three lines of inquiry have been followed, historical, doctrinal, exegetical. What has been taught concerning Regeneration by the Churches? What elements of truth are there in the various methods of Regeneration which have been advocated? What is the history of the errors considered orthodox, and how did they develop out of a rational conception of the New-Birth?

These questions have been kept in view ; and some of the answers may be satisfactory to those who seek for truth.

Some readers may be chiefly interested in the passages of Scripture explained ; others in the variety of opinions and the criticisms. Young students may profit by the references and the method of research. By comparing one system of doctrine with another, and by observing the influence of philosophy upon theology the truth may be discovered.

Many a volume has been written on the doctrines related to Regeneration reviewed in this essay. Therefore it may claim to be judged as a whole ; for if it be altogether too brief for the consideration of so complicated a theme, it is not fair to expect a defence of every position in every chapter. Unity and development of thought have been respected in the arrangement of sections. But the principal aim has been instruction, and in all the chapters the main truth will be found expressed in some form.

The theological term Regeneration has

become so encrusted with the dust of controversies that the thought is hidden by the opinions accumulated upon it. The word itself needs to be born again that the life under the letter may be perceived. Often has the metaphor been twisted and tortured ; but no better can be found to explain that which every lover of the Bible knows to be a spiritual fact of primary importance.

Δεῖ ὑμᾶς γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. John iii. 7.

Dicit ei Jesus, Ego sum via illa, et illa
veritas, et vita illa: nemo venit ad Patrem
nisi per me. John xiv. 6.

For ye are all the children of God by faith
in Christ Jesus. Gal. iii. 26.

Et consecratus, factus est auctor salutis
aeternae omnibus qui ipsi auscultant. Heb.
v. 9.

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Jesus via, veritas, et vita.

REGENERATION:

ITS

CONDITIONS AND METHODS.

CHAPTER I.


REGENERATION: HISTORY OF THE WORD AND THE FACT.

In the days when Theology was queen of the sciences, the reader of a treatise on Regeneration would expect an exposition of the passages of Holy Writ which referred to the subject, and little more. But in these days a wider view, an extensive breadth of sympathy with modern doubts and difficulties, the power of looking at the subject from new lines of research, and adopting new methods of comparison to cast light upon the old ideas of Regeneration, may be desired, in order to awaken interest in a theme sometimes neglected by those who allow it to be important.

The questions started in the discussion of

Regeneration cannot be answered without an appeal to Scripture; but facts and illustrations out of the beaten track have been sought for in order to present old truth in new light.

The facts of Christian experience can claim the attention of the wisest men, who seek for evidence before they believe, and sift testimony before they are convinced. In every true church of Christ men and women may be found who can testify that they are born from above. Among the facts of their consciousness no change is more marked than the change of thought, feeling, and purpose, called Regeneration. Modern philosophers may be asked as students of human nature to give attention to this class of facts. They have no right to assume that the testimony of unregenerate persons is of more weight or value than the evidence of believers concerning the agency and present influence of the Divine Spirit. It is possible to collect facts of spiritual change, change from wrong ideas of duty to right thoughts of God and eternity, from wicked desires to holy aspirations, from bad conduct to a righteous life, in every group of Christian churches—facts sufficient for proof by the logic of induction that the methods and conditions of Regeneration taught in Scripture



can yet be verified by daily experience. A subject which is so closely connected with the purest and highest life of the present time ought to be worthy of study by all.

By tracing the relation of the word to the fact, we may see how the term became theological; and we can prove from modern literature that it is not yet a fossil of a dead language, but a living word.

The excitement and wonder caused by the common events of birth and death continue in every family unabated in interest to certain individuals from age to age. The world grows old, but there are young people in it. A new being attracts attention when other things come to pass unobserved. The beginning and the end of life on earth are events so important, that we expect ideas of birth and death to manifest their influence on language. What do we find? The primitive relations are amongst the first roots of language. Every great change from the beginning of history, every new epoch, every new career suggests to persons thinking about it the analogy of a birth, of a new life beginning to develop after its kind. No association of ideas is so natural. Wherever a race of men has grown humane enough to have a literature or a

religion, we may expect to find allusions to being born again. But the universal tendency of the human mind to employ this figure of speech warns us to be careful to distinguish. For the same phrase, similar words,—employed by different people widely separated by space or time—will not convey the same ideas. We shall see this illustrated by comparing Hindoo, Hebrew, and Pagan ideas of Regeneration, ancient and modern, with the Christian truth expressed by the theological term.

The claim of originality cannot be maintained by any modern for ordinary metaphors. To the home of the Aryan race we can carry back the analogy between spiritual change and new birth. In Hindostan men spoke of Regeneration long before the time of Christ. Frederick Schlegel said,¹ “The most remarkable point of resemblance between the Indian and the Christian doctrines, lies in the absolute identity of conception with which both describe the process of Regeneration. In the Indian creed, exactly as in our own, so soon as the soul becomes touched with the love of divine things, it is supposed to drop at once its life contaminated by sin, and, as the phoenix rises from its ashes, to spring at once into the pos-

¹ *Schlegel's Lectures at Vienna in 1812*, Vol. I., p. 225,

session of a new and purified existence. . . . The soul so purified is said by the Brahmins to be new-born." We admit that there is identity in the similitude; but we think that there is a wide difference in the process of Regeneration. Under the huge mistakes of thought which have become stratified into the castes of India, we may still find a grain or two of truth—*e.g.*, the importance of hereditary qualities, and the difficulty of elevating a degenerate race. Nobility of nature conferred at birth is a quality not transferable. The regeneration of an individual does not destroy the effects on structure, organ, function, framework of body and mind—the effects of evil habits of many generations—stamped on a low class of human beings. Christian regeneration saves the lost and elevates the fallen; but it does not add a cubit to the stature, nor confer natural talent. There are laws of penalty manifest in deterioration; and moral causes work slowly outward to counteract degeneracy. The Indian creed recognises qualities of race and nobility by birth; but its doctrines of necessity crush out hope by crushing activity. Ignorance of redemption makes the gulf from sin to holiness impassable. We need to be on our guard when, not only

different religions, but different sects of every great religious system, employ the same word with a variety of meanings. For example, the logical effect of Pantheism blots out all moral distinctions by confounding evil and good. Responsibility is crushed out by the sense of the nothingness of the world and all in it; things most real being at best only forms of the One Spirit who is manifest in the clouds of the sky and the foam of the sea, in the excitement of the passionate and the tranquillity of those who have made life most like death. But this approach to Nirvana, to complete idleness and torpor of soul, may be called Regeneration by those whose ideal of the highest wisdom consists in the utmost passivity, the repression of every desire and the extinction of every hope. The Yozis actually strive by self-torture to attain to this new-birth. They have been known to stand for years, even to sleep standing, in order to obtain this first grade of Brahmanical distinction. They are taught that "abstract unity with God is realised in this abstraction from humanity. The Brahmins, in virtue of their birth, are already in possession of the Divine. The distinction of castes involves, therefore, a distinction between present deities and more

limited mortals. The other castes may likewise become partakers in a *Regeneration*; but they must subject themselves to immense self-denial, torture, and penance. Contempt of life, and of living humanity, is the chief feature in their *ascesis* (exercise). A large number of the non-Brahmanical population strive to attain *Regeneration*.¹ It would seem that a Brahman considers himself, and is considered, by nature divine, and therefore *Regeneration* is unnecessary for him. A moral change seems of little moment where the caste is determined by birth.

How different is this from the Christian ideal of a spiritual change for the better, when the burden falls from the back, when every faculty awakens to new life, when the body is regarded as a living temple, when the employment of every talent is felt to be a privilege, when the years of this state of existence seem too few for the work which, in glad service, may be done for the Lord; when desires, like climbers round the tree of life, take hold of the endless ages; when hope rejoices in the eternal glory, and the new-birth is felt to be the noblest enfranchisement, a right of citizenship in the kingdom of God, with the enjoyment of the life and liberty of the children

¹ *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, p. 155.

of God! Surely this idea of Regeneration, drawn from the Bible and the experience of believers in Christ, is very much nobler, and different in many respects from the conception of the Brahmins! Schlegel speaks of their description of the process of Regeneration as identical with the Christian new-birth; but he says afterwards, "On the other hand, Christianity acknowledges distinctly and broadly the principle that all men are equal before God; a principle much better calculated than the other to nourish within us the noble spirit of freedom. In the Christian system, all heavenly possessions are the free gift of Heaven, and they are often conferred on those whom we should be apt to consider as the most mean and the most unworthy. In the religion of the Hindoos those blessings which ought to form the common hope of all men, are represented as the peculiar privilege of certain castes. What encouragement for pride on the one hand! what sources of self-despising thoughts and voluntary degradations on the other!"¹ We may learn from this that it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity to favour monopolies, or classes of favourites; and whatever Regeneration is, we may conclude that

¹ Vol. I., p. 226.

it is a spiritual change possible to all men who comply with the conditions of salvation made known for all.¹ But is there any similarity in the process of Regeneration of the Hindoo system and the Christian? We think not; but there is a difficulty in finding any authoritative information of the doctrines of the large communities of worshippers in Hindostan, of which some have many gods, and some no god—some have good maxims and bad morals, and all have a very vague conception of sin. One of the scholars who has studied their sacred books says, after immense labour, “Even then our eyes would not have reached many of the sacred recesses in which the Hindoo mind has taken refuge, either to meditate on the great problems, or to free itself from the temptations and fetters of worldly existence by penances and mortifications of the most exquisite cruelty.”² But nearest the source we find the stream of thought purest. There is much truth in the Veda. The old Brahmans regard the Upanishads as sacred writings. In the Katha Upanishad the following sentiments occur:—“That self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4; 1 Cor. i. 21-24.

² Max Muller: *Chips*, Vol. IV., p. 314.

nor by much learning. He whom the self chooses, by him alone the self can be gained. The self chooses him as his own" (23). "But he who has not first turned away from the wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the self, even by knowledge". (24). "*Some are born again as living beings, others enter into stocks and stones, according to their work and according to their knowledge.*"¹ The Upanishads "teach that there is no hope of salvation, and no deliverance, except by the individual self recognising the true and universal self, and finding rest there where alone rest can be found."² Sometimes Strauss speaks the truth. He says, "The world is to us the workshop of the rational and the good. That on which we feel ourselves absolutely dependent is by no means a brute power, before which we must bow in silent resignation. It is order and law, reason and goodness, to which we surrender ourselves with loving confidence. In our inmost nature we feel a kinship between ourselves and that on which we depend. In our dependence we are free; and pride and humility, joy and resignation, are mingled

¹ Max Muller's *Lectures*, 1878, p. 336.

² *Ibid.*, p. 340.

together in our feeling for all that exists."¹ Men who seek the light are not left in complete darkness. No theory of the universe can destroy altogether the consciousness of sin. Conscience appeals to goodness and blames wickedness, even when the philosophies of Hindoos and Germans deny moral distinctions.

If the Hindoo method of Regeneration be by penances and cruel mortifications, then it is contrary to the Christian process by faith which the Apostle John thus describes,—“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”² But amidst the corruptions of Christianity the method followed by those who felt the need of Regeneration has been too often akin to the process of penance, of self-torture long practised in Hindostan. Was Luther at Rome, when crawling up the steps of the church, acting as a heathen or a Christian? He had not the knowledge of the truth when he was thus torturing himself to attain to the higher life. Is it right to speak of him as born again before he was justified by faith?

¹ Max Muller's *Lectures*, 1878, p. 3. ² John i. 12, 13.

Regeneration is, in Christian theology, confined to this life and to the beginning of the Christian career. We have hints of different ranks in the heavenly state of existence, rewards being given in proportion to faithful service, not popular success. One star differs from another in glory.¹ But "absent from the body present with the Lord,"² is an expression of change from life temporal to life eternal, after the death of a believer.

But what were the ideas of the Greeks and Romans?

Plato³ makes Socrates describe a return to life, the soul being *born again* under different human conditions for probation, as philosopher, king, politician, tradesman, husbandman. "The soul which has seen most of truth *shall come to the birth* as a philosopher." . . . "He who lives righteously improves, and he who lives unrighteously deteriorates his lot."

Christianity teaches that conduct makes character; and as the character is bad or good, the soul is moving along the line of death or life, with increase of unhappiness or holiness.⁴ Plato mentions

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42; Matt. xiii. 12; xxv. 23. ² 2 Cor. v. 8.

³ *Phædrus*—Plato—Jowett, Vol. I., p. 582. ⁴ Rom. ii. 6-11.

nine states of probation. He also gives the time! "Ten thousand years must elapse before the soul can return to the place from whence she came, for she cannot grow her wings in less!" . . . "And at the end of the first thousand years the good souls and also the evil souls both come to cast lots and choose their second life, and they may take any that they like." . . . "But the soul of him who has never seen the truth will not pass into the human form, for man ought to have intelligence."¹ There is plenty of scope for speculation if we allow the imagination to take wing and fly upward to the "plain of truth." Many like an excursion with the philosophers of Greece and the forest-students of Hindostan. But to those who have the Christian revelation—the Word of God—the fancies of the best pagan writers indicate the unrest of the mind. We still need to listen to the voice of divine authority. Christ says, "Ye must be born again."²

Some dim ideas of Regeneration by a purgatorial method can be traced in Virgil; and he was giving poetical expression to thoughts which were common to the speculations of the Platonists, Pythagoreans, and Stoics. In the

¹ Plato, p. 583.

² John iii. 7.

sixth book of the *Æneid* is this beautiful and well-known passage, containing ancient classical notions of a new-birth and a new life after death:—

“ Nor all at once thine ancient ills decay,
Nor quite with death thy plagues are purged away ;
In wondrous-wise hath the iron entered in,
And through and through thee is a stain of sin ;
Which yet again in wondrous-wise must be
Cleansed of the fire, abolished in the sea ;
Aye, through and through that soul unclothed must go,
Such spirit-winds as where they list will blow ;
Oh, hovering many an age ! for ages bare,
Void in the void and impotent in air !
Then, since his sins unshriven the sinner wait,
And to each soul that soul herself is Fate,
For to heaven’s many mansions straight are sped,
(Past without blame that judgment of the dead).
The most shall mourn till tarrying time hath wrought
The extreme deliverance of the airy thought,—
Has left unsoiled by fear or foul desire
The spirit’s self, the elemental fire.
And last to Lethe’s stream on the ordered day
Those all God summoneth in great array ;
Who from that draught reborn, no man shall know
Memory of past or dread of destined woe,
But all shall there the ancient pain forgive,
Forget their life, and will again to live.”¹

Quin et supremo quum lumine vita reliquit,
Non tamen omne malum miseris nec funditus omnes
Corporeæ excedunt pestes, penitusque necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris.

¹ Myers, *Fortnightly*, p. 195, Feb. 1879.

Ergo exercentur pœnis veterumque malorum
Supplicia expendunt; aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos, aliis subgurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scalus aut exurit igni.
Quisque suos patimur Manes; exinde per amplum
Mittimur Elysium, et pauci læta arva tenemus,
Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,
Concretam exemit labem, purumque relinquit
Ætherium sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem.
Has omnes, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,
Lethæum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno,
Scilicet immemores supera ut convexa revisant
Rursus, et incipiant in corpora velle reverti.¹

The translation is somewhat *free*, but it brings out the ideas of Regeneration which commended themselves to the ancient philosophers.

Christ taught that faith in Him is the condition of the new-birth. The modern philosophers who reject the teaching of Christ cannot give any ideas better than those of Virgil and Lucretius. The sacramental efficacy of water-baptism as taught by the Roman Catholic Church, results in so little purification, that it is not surprising that Virgil's ideas of cleansing fires should have been adopted to do what was not accomplished by baptismal regeneration.

The Pythagoreans employed the term to

¹ *Æneid*, vi. 735-751.

represent the transmigration of soul from one body to another. We note that the change supposed to take place in metempsychosis was sometimes called Regeneration. Some theories represent another soul coming into the body which retains personal or formal identity; but amongst the Pythagoreans the soul was believed to animate another body, and be purified by the experience of different conditions of existence in various bodies. The connection of the change with moral reformation may account for the employment of the word Regeneration to denote it.

The modern pantheistic ideas of divine energy are thus expressed by George Eliot¹ in words which convey a theory and method of Regeneration in general, words definite yet indistinct:—

“ God, duty, love, submission, fellowship,
Must first be framed in man as music is
Before they live outside him as a law.
And still they grow and shape themselves anew,
With fuller concentration in their life
Of inward and of outward energies,
Blending to make the last result called man,
Which means not this or that philosopher
Looking through beauty into blankness, not

¹ *Macmillan's Magazine*, p. 173, July, 1878

The swindler who has sent his fruitful lie
By the last telegram : it means the tide
Of mode reciprocal, toil, trust, and love—
The surging multitude of human claims
Which make "a presence not to be put by"
Above the horizon of the general soul.
Is inward reason drunk to subtleties,
And inward wisdom pining passion-starved ?
*The outward reason has the world in store,
Regenerates passion with the stress of want,
Regenerates knowledge with discovery,
Shows sly rapacious self a blunderer,
Widens dependence, knits the social whole
In sensible relation more defined."*

This method of Regeneration is dependent on a self-rectifying power in nature, by which in the long run evil shows itself evil, and good is revealed as good. But modern pantheism knows nothing of redemption, nothing of sin or forgiveness. The general Regeneration is no promise of blessedness to individuals conscious that they need to be born again to see the kingdom of God.

Writing on the historical aspect of the United States, the Dean of Westminster¹ mentioned an ode in which were these words—

“ Noble men and true,
High, low, young, old, wherever you may be,
Awake! arise! cast off this lethargy !
Your ancient faith renew,

¹ *Macmillan's Magazine*, January, 1879.

And set your hands to do the task
That freemen have to do."

Referring to this he says—"Words like these, so uttered and so received, cannot but beget a confidence that the country for which they were written, and in which they were spoken, has within it *the instruments of regeneration, and the germs of future greatness.*"

As Dean Stanley here employs the word *regeneration*, he is thinking of a new life, a new spirit of self-sacrifice animating the aristocracy of America, and regarding political and moral forces as the means of national reformation. The higher life of a nation is the result of the birth of right thought and feelings in the minds of the masses of the population.

Many authors speak of the recovery of moral strength and the regeneration of a country. This figure of speech may be employed by any political writer.

In the Septuagint (Job xiv. 14) the change of the soul at death appears to be meant by the use of the words, "I will wait till I am born again."¹

Christ employed the phrase which was

¹ ὁπερ αὐτῷ ἕως πάλιν γίνεσθαι.

familiar to the Jews when they were speaking of proselytes; for when a Gentile accepted the Jewish creed and ritual he became one of the holy race who were heirs of the promises of blessing. The change was regarded as a spiritual birth, and the proselyte was considered as a child born at the time of his Regeneration. Some Rabbis taught that a new soul took the place of the first, when the man became truly a proselyte. But the rites of purification were complied with by the proselyte before he was regarded as born again.

It is evident from the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus that the old phrase has a new meaning. He explains in John iii. 3-16, that the change is spiritual. The language is metaphorical, but Regeneration is a reality. We read in John iii. 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There may be external cleansing, as in symbolical purification by water, but that is not enough without a spiritual change effected by the Spirit of God. This is the meaning of the verse, we think; for Jesus was not looking here to two agencies, but only to one¹—the

¹ Nam sicut in spiritu et igne (Mat. iii. 11) significat per spiritum igneum, ita hic ex spiritu et aqua est ex spiritu

Hebrew form of expression being equal to born of spiritual water, born of truth, "by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." For the best expositors consider the words of the Baptist, Mat. iii. 11, "With the Holy Ghost and with fire," to be a vivid representation of the purifying work of the Holy Spirit, and not two agencies, not fire as separate from the work of the Spirit.

"The Baptist does not refer to a distinct agency, an element different from the influence of the Holy Spirit. But he adds the words *and fire* to give a vivid description of the mighty and mightily purificatory influence of the Holy Spirit. This is, undoubtedly, the correct interpretation of the appended expression, as has been with more or less of precision seized by Chrysostom ; by Erasmus also, and Calvin and Beza ; as also by Clarke, Benson, Alford, Ewald, Webster and Wilkinson, Wordsworth, and many others."¹ Dr. Morison explains the former clause of the same verse thus—John says, "I baptize you only symbolically into repentance. I confer only the outward emblem of the indispensable divine

aqueo, . . . et Dei cognitio aque comparatur,—Esaïæ xi. 9 ; Grotius (v. John iii. 5).—*Annot.*, p. 869, ed. 1741.

¹ Morison, *Matthew*, pp. 33, 39.

influence—that influence which alone can really and effectually bring you into such a thorough change of thought, and feeling, and purpose, and life, as shall constitute meetness for admission into the kingdom of heaven.”

Professor Cremer does not always distinguish the different standpoints of the sacred writers in speaking of baptism so clearly as one may desire. The outward symbol and the inner influence in Regeneration are, as we think, quite distinct. By reference to the passages in which fire is mentioned, the metaphor can easily be traced—*e.g.*, Isa. vi. 6, 7; Mal. iii. 2, 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27. But Cremer points out the Holy Spirit as the factor in purification, whether fire or water be the pictorial representation of cleansing. He says, “No distinction is drawn between the baptism which Christ adopted from John and transmitted to His disciples and John’s own baptism; it is only said what Messiah’s work is in relation to John’s (cf. Acts i. 5). It follows, however (cf. Acts ii. 38), that the baptism enjoined by Christ, not pointing to something future, but to something present (Acts xix. 4, 5), must have conjoined with the use of water the factor of which John had opened up the prospect; in other words, that it was a baptism

ἐν ὕδατι καὶ πνεύματι, or *πυρί* (cf. John iii. 5.)”¹

There is, we think, in John iii. 5, only one agency; not water as opposed to Spirit, but an explanation of the cleansing ritually performed by water. This spiritual change does not consist in new faculties, new powers of mind. The idea of the Jewish Rabbis about a new spirit, a new soul entering into the body of proselytes who, as they said, were born anew, is an idea without Biblical sanction. It seems to us absurd. But we do read, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new” (2 Cor. v. 17). His personal identity is the same; but the old powers are working in new directions. The man born anew has experienced a great change, like that of the infant at birth; he is breathing a new atmosphere, is nourished with new food, and lives, so to speak, in a new state of existence. For the believer has new thoughts, new feelings, new aspirations. He loves those things he formerly hated, he hates the wicked pursuits he formerly loved.

The change called Regeneration is not re-

¹ *Biblico-Theological Lexicon*, Cremer, Urwick, p. 129, ed. 1878.

quired of a true Christian. Why is it not expected of a true believer in Jesus the Saviour? The reason is plain. The believer is born again. The change belongs to the past. But an unregenerate person is not a true Christian, and requires to believe on Jesus as his or her Saviour, in order to be born again. This change, then, is demanded of all who are unconverted, of all who are not really living disciples of Jesus Christ. Alas! too many have a name to live and are dead.

When, however, there is a spark of Christian vitality, it is dutiful to fan it into a flame. Christ will not break the bruised reed. He will not cast off the feeble Christian. For as a mother nurses a child, so does the Redeemer nurse those whose faith is child-like, weak, and requiring nourishment. We point to regeneration for the unconverted, to sanctification for the converted, for all true Christians.

The word *παλιγγενεσία* has a prophetic meaning which lies beyond time. At the close of this dispensation of change from bad to good, there will come a period of progress from good to better, a period called "eternal life," or "life everlasting," or "the times of restitution of all things" (see Mark x. 30; Luke xviii. 30; Acts iii. 21). It is apparently

to this period Christ points in Mat. xix. 28, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, *in the regeneration* (ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ), when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones." Faithful service will then be rewarded.

The dimness of distance attracts many minds; and the glory of the sunset mingling with the dawn gives bright colours to this new-birth of all things. It is interesting to note that the same word is employed in Titus iii. 5. We can trace in the restoration of moral order in one soul the first thread of the spiral winding about upward, like the stair in the temple, which connected the lower with the higher. We prefer to consider these times of regeneration as the harvest period of the present seed-time of reformation. The golden age of the poets lies at either end of time—"Out of eternity each new day is born, into eternity again 'twill return."¹ The ancients looked backward; the moderns look forward. But the future we may leave with God, who makes all things new (Rev. xxi. 5). We hope it will be far superior to the time before man had sinned—a higher

¹ Goethe.

development, a grander revelation of the moral glory of God.¹

It is the duty and privilege of believers to have some experience of the new creation of order out of spiritual chaos. We have to consider the fact of which the Apostle Paul was writing when he said to Titus—"After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." This fact has many relations to Christian theology. It lies near the centre of doctrine. It touches the problems of knowing and being. The same word, Regeneration, refers to other facts which we now leave aside, that we may study this spiritual change, which relates not to future developments in a different state of existence, but to the present life; which refers

¹ "Tempore illo mutabitur totum opus creationis in melius et redibit in statum suum perfectum ac purum, qualis erat tempore primi hominis, antequam peccasset."—Cremer, *Lexicon*, p. 151.

not to reforms of institutions, not to political alterations, but to a change experienced by individuals, one by one.

The types and symbols of pagan and Hebrew thought cluster around Christ.

“ O Fount of endless life !
O Spring of waters clear !
O Flame celestial, cleansing all
Who unto Thee draw near.”

CHAPTER II.

REGENERATION : ITS RELATIONS TO NATURE AND GRACE.

THERE are two large classes of facts represented by two words—*nature*, *grace*—which demand consideration as soon as we begin to study the subject of Regeneration. The facts by one school would all be put in one class. The denial of the supernatural makes *nature* stand for everything, *grace* for nothing. But most people who take an interest in Regeneration admit that we have divine and human influences to take into account, in order to explain the facts of experience which those born again commonly acknowledge.

The words *nature* and *grace* are seldom em-

ployed by two writers in the same sense; and definition of the meaning of a word is hardly possible unless there be some standard of accuracy. Even restricting investigation to the meanings of any two authors, it will be found that in their use of the words *nature* and *grace*, their ideas are coloured by their philosophy and theology. Under the various significations of *nature* and *grace*, there are several terms which demand distinct definitions.

Some who advocate the necessity of grace, destroy the distinction between it and nature, by maintaining the optimist opinion that whatever is, is right. The Bible recognises sin and the consequences of sin, from Genesis to Revelation.¹ But it points to the works of God both in nature and grace as always righteous (Ps. cxlv. 17).² The evil in the world is often connected with sin, as a punishment of actual transgression or a part of the discipline of this world, in which sinners are governed according to the laws of grace and nature, both being provinces of divine administration. Modern philosophy affirms the contrariety between the ideal order and the facts of human

¹ Ps. liii. 2, 3.

² Cf. Gen. i. 31; Luke i. 68, 77, 78; John i. 17.

life more loudly than modern theology. The line of Tennyson,¹

“ Nature red in tooth and claw,”

gives a graphic picture of one province and one class of facts in nature where we cannot properly speak of sin. But the colour is too red. Nature can be described as beautiful and benevolent. When Schopenhauer makes life all black, he refutes his own theory of pessimism by his own complacency in it. Things are neither all right nor all wrong in this world. If every human being were holy there would be no need for Regeneration. If there was no contrariety between grace and nature, we would not find in Scripture passages like the following: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”² In this gift we find *grace*—divine favour bestowed upon an unworthy race—“children of disobedience.” “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the

¹ *In Memoriam*.

² Rom. vi. 22, 23.

mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved."¹

The Ephesians, before their regeneration, were children of wrath; afterwards they were obedient children, holy and faithful in Christ Jesus, being *as believers* marked off beforehand unto the adoption of children by God the Father, "according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved."² Whatever meaning we attach to the word nature, we may infer, even from these passages, that grace is revealed most fully in Jesus Christ. Grace is a form of divine love, and in all the Scriptural significations of the word *grace*, we can find love, benevolent and compassionate. Without Jesus Christ we could not explain the grace of God. He is grace incarnate. His mission was an interposition, something out of the ordinary course of nature. He revealed that divine nature which is at heart love. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made

¹ Eph. ii. 3-5.

² Eph. i. 5, 6.

by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."¹ God is above nature. We may speak of the incarnation as the grandest miracle or the fullest display of divine grace and truth. Christ's coming was the primary condition of Regeneration. The sphere of divine influence and fellowship which is called grace is *in Jesus Christ*. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, *that we might live through him*. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."² This is the divine method of Regeneration by grace.

We can speak of *nature*, and exclude from our thoughts all moral and spiritual ideas. But we cannot think of *grace* without including the best spiritual activities. The operations of the Holy Spirit are often meant by the term *grace*;³ for He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, to awaken, to con-

¹ John i. 2-4.

² 1 John iv. 9, 10.

³ Rhetorical phrases have to be taken with a grain of salt—*e.g.*, "La même grace qui change la condition, change l'homme qu'elle y appelle. L'Esprit de Dieu le saisit, il lui donne un nouveau cœur, et il devient un autre homme."—*Saurin*, Vol. VII., p. 416.

vince, to convert, to sanctify. His titles are all drawn from the gracious sphere of divine influence—the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth¹—and signify to us the divine means of Regeneration. Believers are said to be born of God. If we ask how? we are informed, “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto,” says the Apostle Paul, “He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”² Again, he says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”³ Again, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”⁴

Ideas of moral agency are generally more correct now than they were when representations of the reign of law included the moral sphere within the sway of physical force, by natural compulsion of the strongest motive. In fact, the distinction of things moral is obliterated if free choice be denied. But there is still danger of misconception from the use of the word *law* in two or more senses. The distinction of the moral sphere is clearly seen by Dr. Oswald Dykes. But the difference in the

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

² 2 Thes. ii. 13, 14.

³ Rom. viii. 16.

⁴ Gal. iii. 26.

obedience to rule of a free agent, and the subjection of a planet by mechanical laws is so great that any comparison between two things so unlike in kind is apt to mislead. He guards against this misunderstanding. "In physics there is nothing analogous to sin; for the stars in their courses cannot fight against their Maker. . . . Disobedience, lawlessness, crime, become only possible in the region of moral natures. They are the penalty we must pay for that noblest of all created things, a free obedience to duty. Still it is one and the same Being who guides the heavenly bodies by the law of gravitation, and who also strives to guide our wills on earth by the law of righteousness. Betwixt moral and physical law there holds, accordingly, a certain resemblance. Each is the condition of order within its proper sphere. Order is the condition of well-being, only to be obtained through the subjection of the individual to the system; that is, *through obedience to rule*. This holds as rigorously in morals as in physics."¹

We find it needful at times to point out that there is no proper comparison between a *thing* and a *person*; the obedience of the former is always *forced*, the obedience of the latter is

¹ *Expositor*, January, 1879.

always *free*; therefore the obedience differs in kind, and cannot legitimately be compared.

All systems of thought based on necessity tend to destroy ideas of moral responsibility in man and personal conception of God—Our Father. But the divine order in nature, the reign of law, has taught men righteousness—the difference between right and wrong courses of action.

“If the ancient poets of the Veda were to live to-day, and if they had to think modern thought and to speak modern speech, I would say that an eternal power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness, would not be a very unlikely rendering they might feel themselves inclined to give of their ancient *Rita*.”¹

After admitting the difficulty of the derivation, Müller says, “While in Sanskrit *rita*, from meaning the order of the heavenly movements, became in time the name for moral order and righteousness, *rätus*, though starting from the same source, lent itself in Latin and German to express intellectual order and reasonableness.”²

If we are to maintain the distinction between

¹ Max Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, 1878, p. 246.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 248, 249.

nature and grace, between the laws of the Divine procedure in the two spheres, physical and moral, we must watch carefully their distinctions.

How shall we define or explain the term nature in its relation to Regeneration?

In the Greek of the Apostle James, iii. 6, 7, there are two phrases both suggestive and instructive: *τόν τροχόν τῆς γενέσεως* is translated "*the course of nature*," and *πᾶσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων*, for every nature of beasts.¹ Human nature is superior to every *kind* of nature by possessing the kingly power of rule, of subjecting all in the three *natural* kingdoms—animal, vegetable, mineral—to the purposes of mankind. But the power comes by intelligent observation of the course of nature, and adaptation of means to ends. The laws of heredity can be traced in all the animal kingdom. By these laws of natural generation we can explain the corruption of the human race, the bias to evil being the consequence of the sins of our first parents and of their successors.

Without defending the exposition we admit the truth of Dr. Eadie's comment, "And so we

¹ *φύσις*, nature—human and divine; Rom. ii. 14; Gal. i. 15; 2 Pet. i. 4.

are the 'children of wrath,' not accidentally, not by a fortuitous combination of circumstances, not even by individual sin and actual transgression, but *by nature*—by an exposure which preceded personal disobedience, and was not created by it; an exposure which is inherent, hereditary, and common to all the race by the very condition of its present existence, for they are so born children of wrath."

But we would understand the wrath of God to be only against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness," not against innocent children, although by the order of nature, by the laws of heredity, they suffer much through the sins of their parents. Remembering the words of Jesus, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," we look upon all innocent children as children of grace. When theologians have made terrible mistakes about the character of God, we need not wonder that J. S. Mill speaks of "nature working without a conscience or an aim, a non-moral force, often producing evil as well as good." But the mechanism of the universe has been adjusted for benevolent purposes. To suspend every law of sequence would destroy what we call nature. The manifestation of the divine will in nature is that of uniformity of sequence. Redemption comes

from above. It is supernatural in its origin. It comes from the Divine Mercy. It is available for all mankind. Grace covers the operations of the Divine Spirit in the economy of redemption.

Regeneration belongs to the supernatural, to grace as contrary to nature. But there is an underlying unity of law and operation in the two spheres. Both have their energy from the divine mind, and their order.

"The continuity of nature," says the Rev. Joseph Cook, "is only the continuity of the divine plan and its execution. A thorough-going recognition of the Divine Immanence and Omnipresence both in mind and matter is the only explanation of the origin of souls and of the laws of hereditary descent.¹ . . . A magnet may create other magnets, and yet not diminish its own power or lose its separateness from the power it creates. The magnetism in all souls is from God, and yet different from Him. The kindling of all finite lives is God's, although the flames are distinct individualities.² . . . If we could not get rid of disordered human organisations what would happen in the centuries? Oliver Wendell Holmes remarks that most people think that any difficulty of a physical sort can

¹ *Boston Lectures*, p. 82.

² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

be cured if a physician is called early enough. 'Yes,' he replies, 'but early enough would commonly be two hundred years in advance.' Concerning the terrible earnestness of nature it is certain that she means well, even in her severities.¹ . . . The supreme powers have a law that whenever a man submits himself utterly to that divine thing in him we call conscience, a new set of affections shall be given him by a rearrangement of his nature. A light will stream in through dome windows which before were curtained. There will come into the depths of his life a quickening and transforming power utterly unobtainable except by total self-surrender to conscience."

This rearrangement of his nature is simply Regeneration; and the true light in conscience is the Divine Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. The condition of new-birth here enforced is obedience to the truth, complete surrender of self to God.

We perceive divine order in both spheres of divine activity—both in *nature* and in *grace*. Disorder is permitted within certain limits. Like sin it is contrary to the divine will; but it is the result of the choice of wrong by moral agents. This disorder, the consequence of sin, is

¹ *Boston Lectures*, p. 89.

revealed by the laws of nature, which are uniform methods of divine action in things physical.

The proper inference from the uniform variations of a watch is, good construction but bad setting. Disorder in human nature reveals the choice of evil and the consequences of sin. Many things have by men been set wrong. The forces of nature draw their energy from God, and in themselves are good. They work out evil results of evil; and good results of good choice. Nature is like a mechanical power, uniform in working out its results. Grace is a rectifying power. In the sphere of grace moral conditions are uniformly respected.

Again, we find grace above nature. Good triumphs when Christ has fairplay.

CHAPTER III.

REGENERATION: ITS RELATIONS TO SIN AND HOLINESS.

IF there had been no fall, no degeneration, there had been no need for Regeneration. Paradise lost is implied in paradise restored. Experience daily proves that noble natures may degenerate. Accepting the Scriptural account

of the creation of man, we have to mourn over a child of God becoming disobedient.

We have no proof of animals developing into men; but savage men do approach in ferocity, vileness, and cunning for the gratification of evil passions, the habits of animals. Not only in the wilds of Africa and the deserts of Australia, but also in the slums of large towns degenerate human beings are found. It is easier to go down than to get up.

Writing of New Guinea and its inhabitants, Mr. Alfred R. Wallace says of these Papuans, "We may well suppose them to represent one of the earliest, if not actually the most primitive type of man. It is customary to consider the Australians to be a lower race, and they undoubtedly are so intellectually, but this by no means proves that they are more primitive. The Australian's hair is fine and glossy like our own; *and no one can look at a good series of photographs of natives without being struck with the wonderful resemblance many of them bear to countenances familiar to us at home, coarse and brutalised indeed, but still unmistakably similar.*"¹

The influence of degradation is as visibly stamped on the criminal class in Britain as on

¹ *Contemporary Review*, p. 440, February, 1879.

the inferior races. A physician, many years resident in Zanzibar, considers that in the low parts of the great towns of Europe, worse specimens of the human race can be found than he has seen amongst the negroes of Africa. But to all Regeneration is possible by the stream of life in Christ.

The Bible tells us of the fall of man by influences from beneath; and the study of Regeneration reveals the influences from above by which men are restored to the favour and image of God. The theological lines of distinction are often conventional; and they are more likely to repress inquiry than to guide to truth, unless we remember that they are artificial helps to accuracy of thought. The necessity of Regeneration is found in the corrupt tendencies of human nature. "There is none righteous, no not one." Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."¹

If we ask for the explanation of this universal corruption, we are pointed backward to the origin of the race. The Bible teaches the law of heredity. The apostle argues from the

¹ Rom. iii. 10-12.

fact of sinfulness—"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."¹ We find in the natural consequences of Adam's transgression the need of Regeneration. But theologians have passed sentence upon many innocent children. The mothers of Bethlehem were wounded by the massacre of their babes. Grief has almost destroyed faith in the goodness of God when mothers bereaved have been taught that Adam's transgression had consigned their infants to perdition. Happily truer thoughts of the Fatherhood of God now prevail than those which the divines of the Westminster Assembly approved. The opinion of Dr. William Twisse, the President of the Assembly, is thus recorded:—"And as for those infants who perish in original sin, they perish for that corruption wherein they are born." We cannot believe that any innocent children, heirs of immortality, perish. Born of a sinful race they have never done wrong; for they have been taken away from the sinful atmosphere of this world before they could sin. Denying that innocent children perish eternally, are we prepared to admit that original sin is a reality?

¹ Rom. v. 12.

The facts of corruption, of disease and death, are undeniable. But we consider it absurd to say that the guilt of sin can belong to any but the transgressor. It is incorrect to describe a child, incapable of good or evil, as guilty of original sin; although it is true that the infant suffers some of the consequences of the fall. There is a law of entail in ordinary generation which cannot be abolished. Just as the children of the proprietors of estates forfeited by rebellion are so much poorer on account of the conduct of their ancestors, so in the wealth of soul and body which descends from parent to child, there is a loss to the offspring through the misconduct of ancestors. But neither poverty nor corruption is sin.

For many years there are latent evil qualities, desires, and passions, which spring up, tiger-like, to destroy what stands in the way of their gratification. But they can be controlled by every sane mind. Reason ought to reign. Conscience approves of the law of righteousness. Conduct is the result of many forces; temptation pulls downward, but conviction of duty points upward. Blessed is the man who takes the right course !

However, the corruption does not come with temptation. Unless there was powder in the

barrel the flash of fire would produce no explosion. The evil tendencies in the nature are aroused by temptations. Do these tendencies make the whole nature evil? There cannot be perfect holiness where they exist. But in many good fields there are weeds in flower and weeds in the soil waiting for a favourable season to grow. They may die out. By the work of the Holy Spirit the evil effects of sin can be eliminated from the structure of body and mind. But the cure of the disease is a slow process, call it regeneration or sanctification. Without our will we are members of a race tainted with the leprosy of sin; but God does not elect us against our will to share in the blessings of the balm of Gilead. "Who-soever will let him take the water of life freely."¹ When the benevolent law of parentage, instead of producing evil to the evil, shall bless Christian parents, so that a legacy of good shall be bequeathed to their offspring, we shall be approaching the times of restitution, the time of the Regeneration completed, when the law of life in Christ shall have overcome the law of death.

It cannot be denied that children inherit sinful tendencies; and men come to know the

¹ Rev. xxii. 17.

strength of these tendencies by their efforts to resist and control them. We cannot disconnect ourselves from the family and the race to which we belong. In a deep sense the child is father of the man. The powers and propensities in the infant affect the character to a great degree. There is no fixed law of development which necessitates every change in the growth of character; for there is room for repentance, and for free choices regulating the forces which build up the man. Circumstances modify the activity of every function; but the latent forces in the infant are as powerful as the outward influences in shaping the life. The bundle of possibilities in a human child who can estimate? Propensities to evil are found in every human being, more or less; and the nature of the disposition called good or bad according to the smaller or greater inclination to evil, is connected with the laws of parentage.

The broad facts of likeness in form and feature, in temper and talent, in members of the same families, have long been recognised. But the strong bias to good or evil is not so clearly perceived, owing to the amount of control which each individual has over every temptation to sin, and to the fact that the

workings of the heart are unseen in resisting solicitations to evil. Modern science points to the law of heredity, and to the third and fourth generations sharing in the consequences of good or evil conduct. Body and soul are closely connected.

The sense of responsibility was keenly felt by King David when he confessed to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;"¹ but he traced back the propensity to sin to former generations—"behold, I was shapen in iniquity," and he perceived that no outward change would suffice, for he prayed—"Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." He could not make nor unmake himself. He had some knowledge of the truth that Paul afterward expressed,—neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but faith which worketh by love.² "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."³ "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."⁴

As the race was represented at the first by Adam, and sin dates from the fall of our first parents, so individuals who have been born again are pledges of the future renovation of

¹ Psalm li. 4. ² Gal. v. 6. ³ Gal. v. 5. ⁴ Gal. vi. 15.

the race. When Paul could say, "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death,"¹ he was the representative of all who are to enter through faith into the glorious liberty of the children of God. But he was conscious of a corrupt tendency which he had to strive against. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."² The involuntary automatic action of body and mind had the taint of corruption. He could control this law of his nature by choosing to serve God, and praying, like David, "Create in me a clean heart."

In the sixth chapter of the Westminster Confession we read (Section V.), "This corruption of nature, *during this life doth remain in those that are regenerated*; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin." VI. "Every sin both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries, spiri-

¹ Rom. viii. 2.

² Rom. vii. 25.

tual, temporal, and eternal." This definition of original sin and the penalties attached to it is clear enough. But who believes that "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil?"¹

The statements in the Confession of Faith are based upon an incorrect definition of sin, as we believe. For if we distinguish between temptation and sin, between solicitations to evil, from within or from without, and actual transgression, we shall see a great difference between the corruption of our nature, for which we as individuals are not responsible, and the wrong-doing in thought or action, for which we are responsible. It is our misfortune that we inherit blood so tainted with evil; it is our own sin for which we have to answer to God. If we could not have helped a certain act of transgression, if we were forced to it by agencies over which we had no control, then we were not responsible for the inevitable. David could have resisted temptation and not sinned. He knew this, and confessed he sinned.

But when we trace the origin and history of the corrupt tendencies in human nature, we find that we have to deal with the race

¹ Vide *Glasgow Herald*, 3rd May, 1878.

as a unit, as well as with the individual. All corruption does not come from without. The heart is deceitful and difficult to analyse. We mean by the word heart the inner part of our nature—the seat of motives. It is the central repository of the forces which are manifest in conduct. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."¹ It is a shallow philosophy that sees in evil example and untoward circumstances the origin of all the corruption in men. We believe that each individual has the freedom of choice which makes him a reasonably responsible being.

Facts conquer theories, however plausible. But facts are often wrongly interpreted: bias to evil in human nature is not sin. "De Maistre opposed the doctrine of original sin, and the radical depravity of all flesh, to the belief in the original goodness and the indefinite perfectibility of human nature, which was the basis of the whole theory of Rousseau. He delighted in contrasting, with an irony which recalls Pascal, the bitter reality with the Utopias of the eighteenth century, and concludes, alluding to his own life,—'Je ne

¹ Matt. xv. 18.

sais ce qu'est la vie d'un coquin, je ne l'ai jamais été, mais la vie d'un honnête homme est abominable.'"¹

The doctrine of original sin, as taught by the sixteenth century theologians, shocked the moral sense, and made sin and law unreal, by giving false ideas of the moral character of God. We admit that children suffer, through the effects of sin, parental and original. But we deny that an innocent babe can be a transgressor of law.

Regeneration is more than a legal change of state. The power of growth is connected with divine energy. The corruptions inherited are gradually eradicated by the work of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of the process may be called regeneration, conversion, or true repentance: the completion is termed perfect sanctification; but there is one line throughout this development of spiritual life. From the original evil heart, from the ruin and chaotic state of the human spirit, to the beauty and order of the new creation, we can trace the Divine Spirit, creating a clean heart, renewing a right spirit. In place of darkness there is light. Instead of the turmoil of disordered passions and propensities there is the peace of

¹ *The Nineteenth Century*, p. 225, Feb. 1879.

self-control. Instead of the evil imaginations there are pure desires and holy emotions. But we find no two individuals exactly alike. The threads of history differ in texture. We represent multitudes of forces in previous generations. The effects of the struggle for existence and the struggle for spiritual conquest are doubtless visible to the eye of God in the fibres of our nature ; unseen by us, but affecting us in a hundred ways. Every time we resist evil, we are gaining moral strength ; every time we fall we lose some moral power. The law of habit, which builds up the character of the individual, is not without its influence on ordinary generation. But the poorest and weakest human beings, the lost, are sought by Jesus in order to save them. The law of Regeneration, of life in Christ, is available to all who believe in His name.

The influence of heredity has been enforced by men of science in modern times more than by theologians. But the Bible plainly teaches a law of parentage both in blessing and in cursing. We read, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children ; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to

do them.”¹ But, on the other hand, we are told—“I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”²

The rewards and penalties of this law are in part visible in the framework of body and mind. Some children are born with dispositions which are inclined to goodness. Some are called from the womb to noble service.³ Others are early inclined to naughtiness.⁴ Science points to the fact that a large proportion of the children of intemperate parents become intemperate. They are born with a strong craving for intoxicating liquor. That is in the heart, in the centre of their sensitive nature. Other sins of parents are doubtless the causes of evil tendencies. But all propensities to wrong-doing which can be controlled, cannot be eradicated by the power of man. Therefore each of us should pray, “Create in me a clean heart”—for the sake of future generations. The latest investigations into the characteristics of individuals, point to a law of

¹ Ps. ciii. 17, 18.

² Ex. xx. 5.

³ Isaiah xlix. 1-3.

⁴ Ps. lviii. 3.

descent by which grandparents appear to be as potent in their moulding influence upon features of body and features of character as the parents. But after all little is known.

We infer both from Scripture and experience that Regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit, is made essential by the changes required in the heart, in order that there may be a right disposition toward holiness, instead of a wrong bias toward corruption. For so long as there are unholy motives in the heart actuating, for the most part, the conduct, so long as self is first and God's will second, there is no proof of the new creation; but, on the contrary, evidence that the person so thinking must be born again before he can see the kingdom of God. But when the cry for mercy has gone up from the soul conscious of sin, when self-deception has been revealed by the truth, and there is some knowledge of the love of God in Christ, the prayer of faith is a proof of Regeneration. "Create in me a clean heart," expresses the desire of a believer seeking more sanctification, convinced of the need of holiness. We may all say,—

"We are sinful,—cleanse us, Lord :
Sick and faint,—thy strength afford :
Lost, until by thee restored,
Comforter Divine."

CHAPTER IV.

REGENERATION, NO MERE OUTWARD CHANGE.

NOT a little confusion of thought has resulted from ecclesiastical methods of Regeneration, in which ritual change has been put before that spiritual change, the necessity of which was plainly pointed out by our Saviour. The shades of meaning attached to the term Regeneration, by different schools of thought in various sections of the Christian Church, are very numerous. Therefore perplexity is caused not only by minute varieties of denominational colours, difficult to distinguish where it is plain that persons are speaking of the same thing from different standpoints; but the perplexity is also increased by the use of the same term to facts and processes which seem entirely different in nature. It is important, then, to point out what is not Regeneration, and to distinguish qualities which may be found alike in the conduct of the regenerate and unregenerate.

. Most theologians will admit that unregenerate persons are not Christians. They may be

industrious, honest, kindly, and moral in outward conduct, and yet unregenerate. They need to be born anew, born from above, like Nicodemus. The wicked who make no effort at self-restraint, except what is needful for continuing the indulgence of their passions, are very unlike Christians, and are not likely to be mistaken for regenerate persons. But all men require to be born anew, all who are out of the Christian sphere of thought and feeling, all who are not in Christ. There are prodigals who have gone far from home, and others who are at no great distance, but who are moving away from the control of the Righteous Father. Regeneration takes place when they change their thoughts, and turn with contrition and full purpose of heart to the Lord.

The change is not superficial. Men may renounce idolatry and not be born again, born from above. Men may change one form of worship for another; they may go from church to chapel, from chapel to church, and not be born from above. Men may be abstainers and active members of temperance societies, and not born from above. Persons may be moved to tears by descriptions of the misery of sin and the awful condition of the lost in

this world and the next, and not be born again. Persons may live honourably, paying their debts, and doing their duty as citizens and members of society, and not be truly regenerate. Persons may be regular hearers of the word, contributing their share to the income of the church, and yet not truly regenerate. Persons may sit down at the Lord's Supper, and be for years members of the church, and not truly regenerate.

We infer, then, that Regeneration is not an outward form, that no profession can take its place, that no superficial change of ritual or conduct warrants a person to believe that he is born again. The label does not alter the contents of a jar; the name Christian cannot change the character. But the name of Christian is too often associated with unchristian conduct.

Need we wonder that a poet writes,—

“ Speak not to me of Christian names,
Of piety and grace ;
Your friend goes to the sanctuary
And prays with meek grimace,
Then meets you on the morrow, mild,
And robs you to your face.”¹

In mentioning what is not proof of Regeneration, we have pointed out many feel-

¹ Galbraith, p. 15.

ings and actions which may be manifested by those who are born again, as well as by those who are not. Regeneration is more than a temporary change of conduct. When a man's words and deeds please the Lord we may infer that he is born of God.¹ But Regeneration is more than an outward change.

In the problems of modern times, and in the discussions about improvement, there is a tendency to look more to what things surround men, than to what thoughts are the ruling principles within the mind. The health of great cities is worthy of consideration, and sanitary laws are worthy of study; but we might have a clear sky, the smoke consumed, the drainage perfect, houses well built, drink shops difficult to find, and yet be a few degrees short of perfection. So long as our circumstances are not so favourable to health and morality as they might be, so long ought we to give all honour to men who keep these improvements in view; and help willingly every movement to lessen disease, promote temperance, increase pure amusements and social happiness. But outward remedies always commend themselves; spiritual remedies, such as Christianity presents, are often undervalued. The

¹ 1 John v. 3-5.

Pharisees had great faith in washing the outside of the cup; and the Jews, as a race, have been careful to have clean food and pure water. The sanitary laws of Moses are yet worthy of study. But these observances that we call ceremonial, which were intended to purify and promote health, and were good enough in their place, were not enough to preserve the nation from corruption. Christ taught men to cleanse their hearts; to keep the fountains of life pure. He taught the Jewish Ruler the necessity of Regeneration—not a superficial change, but a spiritual change of thought, feeling, and purpose.

Need we say that good features of character are not condemned, when we affirm that outward changes, even renouncing covetousness and intemperance, two common forms of modern idolatry, are not enough to make a man a true Christian. If any one came to Christ and said, I am now an abstainer and a believer in God Almighty, and I wish to be admitted to the Church; we believe that Jesus would say, So far good, my friend; but “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” If any one said, I have been an active worker, distributing tracts, helping the minister, visiting the sick, therefore I wish to

be acknowledged a true Christian,—the reply might again be, So far good, my friend ; but this is not enough ; these things are superficial, men can see them. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

These mistakes supply the key to the conversation with Nicodemus, who thought he would be admitted to the Christian community by a simple profession of faith in the miracles and divine mission of Christ. He resembled a proselyte of the gate who had renounced idolatry and professed faith in God, the Maker of heaven and earth, but had refused to be circumcised, and kept himself outside of the privileges of the old covenant. Nicodemus acknowledged that Christ was a great teacher sent of God ; but Nicodemus was not prepared to take up his cross and follow the Saviour. Christ taught him that a great change must take place in his thoughts, feelings, and purposes before he could enter into the kingdom of God—into that state which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

It may be important to observe how Nicodemus had introduced himself—how much he admitted, and how he stopped short of decision for Christ, of change of heart. He had a

kindly feeling toward Jesus. He acknowledged that He was no impostor. He thought that the mission of Christ was divine. He was able to give a reason for this conviction. We infer, therefore, that a person may admit the force of Christian evidence without being born again.

Some are prepared to say of Christianity as much as Nicodemus said to Jesus? However, it is not enough to recognise the claims of Christ as the living bread which came down from heaven; it is not enough to speak about the truth as it is in Jesus; for bread does not nourish unless it is eaten, nor truth purify unless it is received,—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The language is figurative, and the metaphor is bold. But it is important to understand the meaning of the Saviour. The context supplies the interpretation. The original word translated “again”¹ (*ἀνωθεν*), is employed John iii. 31, and translated “above.” The same Greek word is found in James iii. 17, and there rendered from above,—“The wisdom that is *from above* is first pure, then peaceable.” We might translate verse 3 correctly thus, “Except a man be born from above;”

¹ John iii. 3.

and this rendering sends the mind upward to things spiritual. Nicodemus was puzzled by the expression, for the true meaning had not dawned upon him. He took the figurative language as if it contained no metaphor; and the Saviour rebuked him for his ignorance of common forms of speech. But there are many who forget that the metaphor has a meaning which ought to be pondered by every person unconverted, because unbelieving. The boldness of the figure may produce incredulity; and the necessity of Regeneration may be put aside from the sphere of responsibility by the feeling of the impossibility of creating a clean heart and renewing a right spirit.¹ So long as the attention is directed to human help, the agency will be seen to be insufficient for the change. But the help from above, the divine power which is revealed in the gospel of Christ, is promised to every one that believeth.² It is the duty of every man to give heed to the glad tidings of salvation; and whoever receives the truth receives the divine help which is conditioned upon faith. Every true believer is born from above, and knows something of spiritual change.

Many are familiar with the Bible, read it

¹ Ps. li. 10.

² Rom. i. 16.

regularly, and pray according to use and wont, of whom it may be said they have no more faith than Nicodemus. They do not know that they are born again. For example, M—— M——, a sensible, God-fearing woman, highly esteemed, was led to inquire diligently as to her relation to God by the remark of Captain S——, who said "he would pray for her conversion." In April, 1877, she was in great anxiety of mind, not seeing the light, not at peace with God. To a remark of a friend she said, "Oh, I'm all wrong. I have something yet to give up." When asked what it was, she replied, "It is my bad heart." Mrs. S—— said, "that you must surrender. O Mary, if I could believe for you I would do it." The truth of the gospel was presented in several ways. After two days of darkness and trouble she came to enjoy the peace which God gives to believers. She was tempted to go back, but she was encouraged to go forward and seek the Lord until she found Him. The evidence of joy and peace after faith might be adduced in proof of the theory that then and there she was born again.

But in moral conduct and in practical good sense there was no visible change. She was, however, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Her

religious duties were performed in a different spirit. The childlike gladness and trust were unknown to her before she had the experience briefly recorded here. The difficulty of maintaining that this woman was not a Christian before she had this change of thought and feeling, would be felt by all who distinguish between clear knowledge of the love of God in Christ, and a dim faith in the divine mercy. She had the latter; but there were more clouds than sunshine, until after faith and full surrender she had "the clear shining after the rain," "full peace."

The change in the condition of a sinner at conversion is great. He is no longer in condemnation. He is pardoned and justified for Christ's sake. But the inner change of soul which takes place at the same time, the new thoughts, feelings, desires, aspirations, purposes, are still more important. He is a new creature, a man *born from above*, born anew, by the power of the Spirit of God. But granting the agency of the Divine Spirit, we have to consider the methods He employs, and the conditions which He has laid down for carrying on this work. Regeneration is supernatural; it is a fact which implies *grace*—something more than *nature*. It belongs to a manifestation of

the divine will *from above*, to a new creation, to an order above the natural. But there is this uniformity of sequence in *grace*, that whoever believes the gospel is born again.

The necessity of Regeneration is found in man's state as a sinner, and in the law of benevolence which has made happiness depend on holiness.

The *author* of Regeneration is the Holy Spirit. We have to consider the methods and conditions, which are modified by the actions of the human spirit.

CHAPTER V.

REGENERATION: A SPIRITUAL CHANGE.

It is sometimes difficult for man to distinguish between those that are outwardly moral and those that are renewed in soul, good at heart. But when men are wicked in life and bad at heart, there is no difficulty in concluding that they are unregenerate. The state of the carnal is a contrast to the state of the spiritual. There is no comparison be-

tween things which differ in kind. Between those persons who have been truly born from above, whose whole conduct is swayed by motives which have love at their centre, and those persons who are moved from beneath, who are earthly in taste and devilish in spite; the distance is so great in the scale of character that it is immeasurable. Amongst the regenerate we find many degrees of excellence—good, better, and best. We can compare one Christian with another, and judge who is most like Christ in disposition, in temper, in benevolence, in gentleness, in goodness. Whitfield thought that Wesley would stand so near the throne that the glory of that inner circle of redeemed spirits would be too dazzling for him and many others less sanctified to bear with pleasure. Those who by increasing in holiness have become more and more partakers of the divine nature are far better prepared for the society of heaven, than those whose natures are little refined, who have been plucked as brands from the fire. But being saved by grace, being renewed by the Holy Spirit, the regenerate are so far prepared by faith and love for the communion of saints both on earth and in heaven. Rough in speech and behaviour, the humblest Christian may have the secret

of refinement in love for Christ. By the law of assimilation believers will become better as they approach nearer in thought and sympathy to Jesus. But who can measure the space between a true believer and a wicked person? Like lines at the point of contact, persons may at one time so resemble each other, that the difference in character is imperceptible; but like lines diverging, the good and the bad, the regenerate and the unregenerate, go farther and farther apart. Hate leads to hell; love leads to heaven. However, persons that have been on the Down-line may change on to the Up-line. The Apostle Paul writes,—“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”¹

¹ Titus iii. 3-7.

Here he describes the cause of the change experienced after conversion, and details the means of grace, the revelation of divine love to the human race; points to the agency of the Holy Spirit, and specifies the effects of Regeneration. But the contrast is between perdition and salvation. He mentions the character of the lost whom Christ came to save; and in the next clauses the spiritual state of those saved by grace.

Since the carnal state is so fully described by the mention of wrong thoughts, feelings, and purposes; by folly and want of understanding, by irregular passions and sensual delights, by hatred and envy, by the choice of this world's pleasures—we might expect the apostle to describe, on the other hand, the spiritual state by the prevailing right thoughts, feelings, and purposes, by attention to the gospel and appreciation of divine love, by composure of mind and peace with God, by the choice of Christ as leader and Saviour, and the hopes of everlasting life. But he does not mention the human conditions of Regeneration in this passage. They are implied and explained in other portions of Scripture. Here he points to the divine agency, and directs the mind to the united

influence and separate functions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the work of salvation.

There are many sides to every object, and many points of view for studying every fact of consciousness. Repentance, Conversion, and Regeneration, are terms applied to the same spiritual change viewed from different stand-points. They may be distinguished as earlier and later developments of the new nature, as mental states differing in intensity, but alike in direction of energy God-ward. Repentance, as a term, expresses the turn of thought in which the mind reviews the principles of conduct, the facts of the history of the soul in its relations to God and man, to righteousness and selfishness. Repentance is a kind of reflection; the latter word is generally applied to intellectual reminiscence and review where a philosophical result is expected; but it is only when a moral change has taken place that we speak of the acts of thought as repentance. There is a thinking over again of past thoughts in a new light; the purposes and feelings are examined by the light of the Sun of Righteousness; this reflection excites sorrow for sin, and the Spirit of God draws the penitent toward holiness through belief of the truth of redeeming love. The chief element

in repentance is intellectual; and the attitude of the mind in repentance is at first backward; but at last forward, when the spiritual change takes place, which we may call repentance, conversion, or Regeneration. The chief element in conversion is volitional; but the choice of Christ is made in view of the motives presented by the gospel; the whole personality is swayed by thoughts of sin and righteousness, of human guilt and divine love; the whole soul is open to the influences of the Holy Spirit, convincing of sin, of righteousness and judgment—pleading with the sinner to turn from woe, to give up the dearest pleasures and companions known to be sinful, to look to Jesus, to take up the cross of self-denial, and follow the Master faithfully to death. When therefore all the powers of the soul *turn together* in self-consecration to God, we call the change conversion. The chief element in Regeneration is spiritual; the chief Agent is the Divine Spirit; but the subject of the change is not regarded as passive. Moral agency is respected; thought, feeling, and choice are all active; words are heard or read; the truth of God in Christ is presented to the mind, and when it is received, fully perceived and loved—that is, truly believed—Regeneration has taken place.

Bishop Ken thus describes "a new creature,"—

"God shining on me from His throne,
Benignly brake this heart of stone.
On Thee, my God, my thought shall muse,
Thee sovereignly my will shall choose ;
My love shall to thy love aspire,
The sole desirable desire."

The protest of the Society of Friends was required to reveal to a generation of formalists and ritualists the true nature of religion, as spiritual. They anticipated many of the conclusions of modern theology, in their earliest writings.

Barclay, in his *Apology*, sometimes undervalues the written Word in order to exalt the inner light, as the condition of Regeneration.

But there is need to continue his protest against parrot-repetition of words and school-divinity. Faith is belief of the truth; and the truth carries its own evidence. When the mind is enlightened by the truth, "*I see it*" is often the expression used to testify that faith is a fact, an act accomplished, no longer an effort to look. The inquirer has become a believer when he receives Jesus—the truth. The human spirit is quickened by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. The light is no

longer merely *without* in the Testimony, in the Gospel-message; it is *within* the soul of the person born again. Christ is then said to be in the soul, the hope of glory, the Beloved, the centre of all attraction. Christian poets express this synthesis of the human and the divine thought and affection better than theologians, who have to proceed by analysis to describe Regeneration. La Trobe utters the thought of the believer who feels the glow of first love to the Saviour,—

“How strange is heavenly love!
I never saw His face,
I never trod His courts above,
I have but known His grace;
Yet my affections cling
To His beloved side,
I feel He is my God, my King,
And I His ransomed bride.”

This is a common experience of true believers, varying in intensity according to temperament. No amount of mere theological learning could ever kindle this flame of loving devotion to God. William Cowper was in the light when he wrote of the “unfathomable wonder and mystery divine.” He felt the warmth of the love of God, “the glory and the grace,” when he penned the lines—

“Thou everlasting Lover
Of our unworthy race,
Thy gracious eye surveyed us
Ere stars were seen above:
In wisdom thou hast made us,
And died for us in love,”

Barclay explains the “saving, certain, and necessary knowledge of God” by immediate revelation. But the danger of his teaching is this—that seekers after Regeneration who wish to be assured of their salvation may give more attention to their own thoughts and feelings than to the love of God revealed in Christ as that is recorded in Holy Writ. The Spirit employs the words of Scripture as the hammer to knock with, to gain attention. He takes many other means for rousing the careless, but the Bible is the chief of the ordinary means of grace. The preaching of the gospel is divinely appointed. We grant that “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal;”¹ and the voice of the Spirit is heard where the preacher of the gospel has not yet been. But the outward revelation is the test of the accuracy of the inward revelation; and the knowledge of God which is acquired from Scripture is more

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 7.

reliable than what is called "saving, certain, and necessary knowledge," which cannot be verified. Individual intuitions cannot be generally known, except by the testimony of those who have experienced immediate revelation. That testimony may be believed or not. It will vary in accuracy according to the culture of the witness. Therefore it is not so reliable as Bible-truth. It is important, then, to remember that Regeneration is the result of faith in the truth of the gospel revealed in Scripture.

The inquirer is in the right attitude if he is looking to Jesus, beholding the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world.¹ The right object of faith secures to the believer the blessings of Regeneration. It is always needful to look out from self to Christ. There is, indeed, a complex subjective—objective, which philosophers, like Coleridge, tried to explain, and made dark by excess of subtle distinctions. We can think of what is *in the mind*. That sphere of thought is subjective. It may be made an object of thought. How information got into the mind is a different question. "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that

¹ John i. 29, 36.

is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”¹ The testimony of God may be retained in the memory without producing the saving change called Regeneration. But when the opposition of the will has been overcome, when the truth in the propositions, in the word, has been perceived and accepted, then belief of the truth has supplied the condition of new-birth. Without the help of the Divine Spirit—the omnipresent Spirit of truth—the change would not take place. But as God is always present and willing to save when man takes the way of salvation, the proper inference from the fact of no change in the inquirer’s experience is this—that he has not yet turned into the path of life. Of the thousand wrong roads not one will lead to peace; for there is only one way of access to God—the new and living way, through Jesus who reveals the Father, *through the truth as it is in Jesus*. But it is important to remember that the spiritual change, called Regeneration, is the constant result of knowing Jesus as the personal Saviour. “As His mani-

¹ Rom. x. 8, 9.

festation was outward, when He testified and witnessed for the truth in this world, and approved himself faithful throughout; so being now withdrawn, as to the outward man, He doth teach and instruct mankind inwardly by His own Spirit. *He standeth at the door and knocketh, and whoso heareth His voice and openeth He comes in to such.*"¹ (Rev. iii. 20.)

There is therefore a coming into the soul of a divine guest when a man obeys the truth. But the outward revelation prepares for the inner testimony of the spirit of God. By the written word, which is the testimony of the spirit of God, we can discern the mind of God.

"If that which appertaineth properly to man cannot be discerned by any lower or baser principle than the spirit of man; then cannot those things that properly relate unto God and Christ, be known or discerned by any lower or baser thing than the spirit of God and Christ. But the first is true, therefore also the second. . . . That which is spiritual can only be known and discerned by the spirit of God. But the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the true and saving knowledge of Him is spiritual; therefore the revelation of Jesus Christ and the true and saving

¹ *Barclay's Apology*, p. 26.

knowledge of him, can only be known and discerned by the spirit of God.”¹ But this syllogism is apt to be faulty by the different meanings given to the terms *spiritual* and *revelation of Jesus Christ*.

Barclay's argument is contained in the Apostle Paul's words, 1 Cor. ii. 7-14. However the analogy between the human spirit knowing “the things of a man” and the Divine Spirit knowing “the things of God,” does not warrant the conclusion that “the true and saving knowledge of Him *can only be known* and discerned by the Spirit of God.” For the human spirit can receive the testimony of God, the revelation of Jesus Christ made by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures. We grant that without this testimony of the Spirit through nature, providence, and grace, the human spirit could not have known God. But Jesus taught the love of God for the world. When the sinner believes the gospel he has received Christ into his heart. He can then say that Jesus is the Lord. He affirms this “by the Holy Ghost.”² The outer testimony of the Spirit in Scripture, and the inner testimony of the Spirit are then in harmony. This corroboration is full assurance of faith, pos-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

² 1 Cor. xii. 3, 13.

essed by believers who have grown in grace, and abounded more and more in love, in knowledge, and in all judgment.¹

But the spiritual change, which develops more and more in holiness and intelligence, has a beginning, which is called Regeneration. Whoever has² accepted the testimony of God has eternal life, is born again. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

CHAPTER VI.

REGENERATION: ITS CAUSES AND CONDITIONS.

THE consideration of qualities of character *like* those produced by Regeneration, which could not, however, be taken as proof of the new-birth, revealed the fact that persons might be decently moral, industrious, honest, sober, and profess love to Christ, and yet not be born from above, but continue unregenerate.

The thirteenth verse of the first chapter of John declares that the cause of Regeneration is

¹ Phil. i. 9.

² 1 John v. 1; 9-13.

not to be sought where modern science chiefly points. Children of God are found amongst the sons of men. But it is not by natural selection that the origin of this "peculiar people," of this part of mankind, "this chosen generation," can be explained. The life which is in the blood, the moulding power which is in race, the qualities which are inherited generation after generation, are not the cause of this new development.

We believe with Mr. Cook, that "God suffers long with a man who has taken out of the ancestral spaces burdens, and comes weighted into life. He gives him an opportunity, and puts by his side these laws of heredity—reversional, collateral, premarital, prenatal, and initial. Direct heredity does not choke him. For other laws of heredity stand by him, if natural law is obeyed. Every human being has all the chances represented by the seven laws of hereditary descent."¹

But the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth. Christ, full of grace and truth, is on the side of the poorest sinner.

The constitution of man is respected in all the methods employed by God in Regeneration.

¹ *Boston Lectures*, p. 89.

The intelligence is enlightened, the conscience aroused, the imagination excited, the heart softened. In all the conditions, the causal-nature of man, his free-will, is respected.

The least in the kingdom of heaven is said to be greater than the best born of woman. The new standing of those who are children of God is not a new departure, the effect of culture or higher education, if that term exclude the influence of the Divine Spirit. The regenerate "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

However, in this new creation God respects the fitness of the individuals selected, and acts according to the reception of the truth by every man. The universality of light is the ground of condemnation to those who reject Christ, who will not receive the "true light, which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world."¹ The ground of election is the reception of Christ,—“as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

It is plain, then, that Regeneration is not unconditional. We read, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as

¹ John i, 9.

many as received Him, to them gave He *power* to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 11-13).¹

The Jews who did not receive Christ—the *truth*—had no *authority* to consider themselves sons of God, and no *power* to claim any of the inheritance of those who were born again by belief of the truth.

They who reject the light of the personal Word will not receive the fuller light which He imparts to all who believe in Him.

The world was in darkness concerning salvation. The people of Israel, who ought to have had a clear idea of their position amongst the nations of the world as the Messianic people—*His own*—did not receive the knowledge of God's love which Christ revealed to the world. But those who believed on His name were born from above. If Regeneration had been unconditional, if God had acted arbitrarily without having respect to the state of mind of

¹ *ἐξουσία* (power), John i. 12. This word occurs at least 97 times in the New Testament; 29 times it is translated *authority*; 60 times it is translated *power*. Luke xxiii. 7, it is translated *jurisdiction*; 1 Cor. viii. 9, it is translated *liberty*; Heb. xiii. 10, Rev. xxii. 14, it is translated *right*; Rev. xvii. 13, it is translated *strength*.

those regenerated, then the class of persons who became sons of God would not have been described by the words, "as many as received Him." The idea of belief is included in the knowledge and reception of Christ. Communion with God is established by the knowledge of redeeming love revealed by Jesus and received by the believer. Apart from the will of God to save every man who comes to the knowledge of the truth, we see that man's will or wish to be saved would avail nothing. Regeneration is not dependent upon the will of man in the first place, but upon the will of God. The Sovereign of the universe acts of His own free grace; the Righteous Father felt compassion for every one of mankind—"His offspring," and sent His only-begotten Son to seek and to save that which was lost. Regeneration takes effect by the will of God; but He gives no authority to those who reject Christ to think that they are born again. Many of the people of Israel refused the Messiah sent of God; therefore they were denied the blessings of salvation. Because they, as individuals, did not change their resistance to the truth as it is in Jesus, they did not experience the spiritual change known as Regeneration. However, the fault was theirs. "For God

sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”¹

One condition then, of Regeneration, is faith in Christ as Saviour. This faith implies knowledge of the Light of the world, the personal Word; it also implies willing acceptance of the truth of the glad tidings of salvation.

“Therefore belief was the duty of men, of men in general, because the world was made by Christ. That only makes sense, if by creation something is put in men which renders belief in the self-witness of the Son of God possible, when it comes to men with the demand for belief. That can be nothing else than the Spirit of God the Creator which is in man, and moves him inwardly, besides testifying to him, when he hears the word from Christ, that this word is truth. . . . The evangelist speaks only of a belief in the

¹ John iii. 17-19.

personal revelation and appearance of Christ, and of a sonship which is conditioned solely by the historical Son of God.¹ . . . The birth is a fact which befalls a man. This double thing, title and experience, is mediated only thus, but thus of itself,—that on the ground of, and as a reward of belief, the birth from God is imparted to them by the working of His Spirit, so that therefore as many of them as are believers have experienced it.”²

The cause of Regeneration is the will of God; but this is ever in harmony with perfect love and wisdom. If man has a moral nature God will always respect freedom of choice. We believe that in the new-birth there is no violation of moral law, no lessening of free responsibility.

The Bible plainly indicates some of the conditions of Regeneration. Unconverted men have to be persuaded to change their ideas of sin and their ideas of Christ.³ This change

¹ *Luthardt*, Vol. I., p. 278, Gospel of John.

² *Ibid.*, p. 280.

³ “ Quel sens avons-nous donné à cette expression métaphorique, *naitre de nouveau*? En quoi avons-nous fait consister la vérité de la métaphore? Changement d'idées, changement de volonte, changement de gout, changement d'espérance, changement de projets. Examinez le génie de la religion Chrétienne, vous verrez que ses principes sont en opposition avec ceux d'un irrégénéré; et que

of thought will produce change of feeling. But it is important to remember the order—thought first. Attention to truth comes first, before feeling. Men are not asked to relinquish the right of private judgment, but to exercise it in the light of the truth, and not in the darkness of error and prejudice. The claims of Christ are not opposed to reason; but they are supported by the right exercise of reason in following the guidance of the Spirit of truth.

Those who have been looking to self should change their point of view,—look at once to the Saviour,—Christ pointed Nicodemus to the Cross.

The act of faith receives its importance from the object of faith. This Emmanuel—God with us—this revealer of the Father—this

la religion d'un homme qui refuse de se changer à quel de ces cinq égards que ce puisse être, est une religion directement contraire à celle de J. Christ. . . . Le changement d'idées, dont il est ici question, consiste, ainsi que nous l'avons expliqué, non pas à renoncer à la raison; mais à se persuader, que le meilleur usage qu'un être raisonnable puisse faire de sa raison, c'est de la laisser conduire à Dieu, qui est lui-même la Raison infallible. Or il est démontré par le génie de la religion Chrétienne, que sans cette disposition d'esprit on ne sauroit être Chrétien."—*Sermons*, par Jacques Saurin, Vol. VII., ed, 1749, pp. 440, 441.

Lamb of God bearing away the sins of the world—is the instrumental or efficient cause of Regeneration. In one respect the cause is the will of God; in another respect it is the work of Christ; in another it is the work of the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us. This object of faith is not any *it*, as has been well observed by Mrs. Charles,—“No *it*, cross, church, or dogma. I mean whenever I lay hold of *Him*, suffering, loving, redeeming, forgiving, restoring.”¹ But we do this, we lay hold of the Saviour, by the truth revealed. Men may adopt Christianity as a theory and not be born again; but no person can receive Christ as an abiding guest and not become a child of God.

We infer from the order in the creation, from the marks of benevolent design in the adaptations of organ and environment, of function and force, that there is an intelligent Creator. The creation is the proof. The cogency of word-arguments may be doubted; but the facts of the universe are standing monuments of divine power. There is, however, something more somewhere. The undertone of agony is audible to all who have ears to hear. “For we know that the whole crea-

¹ *Bertram Family.*

tion groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”¹ This seems to point to the times of Regeneration when moral order will be restored. The same word which is rendered *creation* in Rom. viii. 22, is translated *creature* 2 Cor. v. 17.

Are we right in concluding that every one born again is a new creation, a new creature by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit? “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.” Some men of science have been so impressed with the operations of mechanical laws, that they consider there is no need for infinite intelligence and power to account for the order of the universe. To them the laws of motion supply the explanation of the orbits of the planets and the harmony of the sphere. In their minds ideas of creation and faith in the Creator are supplanted by theories of atoms and belief in force. But the Apostle Paul recognises creative power in every sphere, in bad men and in good men. “Because that which may be known of God is manifested in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”²

¹ Rom. viii. 22.

² Rom. i. 19, 20.

In like manner some theologians have been so fascinated by the adaptations of truth to the mind of man, that they have lost sight of the Divine Spirit; they have failed to see the influence and agency of the Holy Spirit in conversion or in Regeneration. Whatever be the cause the effects of the inner working are visible in conduct, for when a man is in Christ he is a new creature, and that is still a wonder. Those who believe in God working in nature, see in the laws of nature the few methods of divine operation which men have been able to trace. They do not deny the laws; but they assert that apart from God these orderly arrangements would not exist. In like manner those who believe in the agency of the Holy Spirit do not deny the adaptations of truth; but they assert that without God there would be no gospel and no Regeneration.

The meaning of the apostle is plain in contrasting the *old man* and the *new man*, in exhorting the Ephesians¹ to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. But a definition of the meaning of *nature* is required when Dr. O. Winslow says, "The new creation of which we speak is not an integral, component part of the old creation, or a mending and improvement

¹Eph. iv. 23, 25.

and melioration of the fallen and corrupt nature which we possess in the first Adam. Far from this. It is entirely, totally, essentially different. It is a new, a divine, a holy nature imparted to the soul ; so that the believer becomes the possessor of *two natures*—the one, the old nature, essentially and totally sinful; the other, the new nature, essentially and totally holy.”¹

In this statement there is exaggeration like that of the Jewish teachers who thought a new soul inhabited the body of the man born again.

Granting, however, that the change is not superficial but spiritual, what are we to understand by a new creature, or a new creation, when the term describes the condition of a believer in Jesus? How much of metaphor is there in the term ?

Goethe in describing the palace of instruction, takes the visitor through a gallery where the events in the Old Testament were depicted by paintings on the wall, and afterwards into a gallery where the miracles and similitudes of Christ were illustrated. The two series of pictures were intended to correspond, but there was a striking difference. “They seemed as if by another hand from the first: *all was softer,*

¹ *Born Again*, pp. 91, 92.

forms, movements, accompaniments, light, and colouring.”¹ Speaking of the New Testament pictures he says—“There is here a new world, a new exterior different from the former; and an interior which was altogether wanting there.”

When a man has been born from above, there is evidence in his disposition, his words, his walk, and conversation that heavenly influences have been operating upon him. The hard, stern man who walked in his pride of integrity and honour, is brought to see that self-righteousness is only outside cleanness; and knowing his own guilt as a sinner who has not loved God with his whole heart, he sees the value of the propitiatory work of Christ, and trusting in the righteousness of God he is born again; he is a new creature in Christ. The stoic pride will be changed into Christian dignity. The latter part of his life will be distinguished even more than the former part by probity and honour; on these lines of outward conduct there will be no divergence from duty. But love to Christ in the heart will mould and soften the whole man. Discerning friends will say he is a new man; a new spirit animates him. He is righteous as of old; but now he is merciful as well

¹ *Meister's Travels*, Vol. II., p. 212, Carlyle.

as just. His gentleness comes out in speech and behaviour. He takes an interest in the poor and degraded. He thinks of his business and of his profits; but he never formerly tried, as he does now, to make his money serve the cause of God, in lessening suffering, in disseminating truth, in comforting the mourning, and in helping the sick. Indeed his actions since his conversion, since his Regeneration, seem as if by another hand. All is softer—forms, movements, accompaniments, light, and colouring. We may say of him, “there is here a new world, a new exterior, different from the former; and an interior which was altogether wanting before.”

The change in state marked by the justification of the sinner after faith in Christ is a legal change; but there is some vital difference denoted by the word Regeneration. The new life may begin at the time the legal change is effected, and, in fact, it is simultaneous. We can think of many changes without altering radically or vitally the character. When a tree is transplanted, roots and all, into a new soil, the change of locality does not alter the nature of the tree: the willow is not changed into the oak. The same kind of leaves will grow on the branches when the spring returns.

But in the change of Regeneration the leaves and fruits of thought are altered. There are new roots. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."¹

The difference in the condition of the regenerate is not slight, it is soon seen. In some respects the change from winter to summer is not more marked.

Look on a landscape when the trees and hedgerows are black and bare. What a difference in colour and beauty from the leafy month of June, when every hedge has its panoply of green, and every tree has its thousand leaves.

Yet you have the same fields, the same roots and branches of trees, the same hills and the same stream. But in the warmth of the sunshine the landscape looks a new creature, a new creation, so different is its summer aspect from the hard, cold, gloomy appearance it had in winter. When a man is out of Christ he is out of the sunshine of divine love, but simply because he is shutting it out. He is a new creature when in Christ.

¹ Isaiah lv. 13.

The contrast of the old with the new is put by Matthew Henry as clearly as by any since. Regarding the new life as a duty more than as a fact accomplished, he says,—“This ought to be the case of all that profess the Christian faith, that they be new creatures; not only that they have a *new name*, and wear a *new livery*, but that they have a *new heart* and a *new nature*. And so great is the change that the grace of God makes in the soul, that, as it followeth, *old things are passed away, old thoughts, old principles, and old practices* are passed away: and all these things must become *new*. Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul—all things are new. The renewed man acteth from *new principles*, by *new rules*, with *new ends*, and in *new company*.”

Whatever the new nature is, it is not a change of the powers of mind. The new creature possesses the same organs of body and mind; but the motive power is changed. It is this change in motive which gives us the best explanation of what is meant by the change in nature. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live

should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”¹

The knowledge of the truth of the gospel is, then, the condition of this change; for the love of Christ actuates the heart through the knowledge of the love which Christ has for man. The Holy Spirit employs the truth as it is in Jesus to renew the soul; it is the divinely appointed means for Regeneration and sanctification. The change invariably follows the reception of Christ through the gospel. Therefore we read, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

It has been well remarked that care needs to be exercised in deciding what change of thought and character is Regeneration, even when the change can be referred to truth in the Bible. For “there are many changes produced by the belief of such parts of the Word as are common to it and other systems, and to maxims of worldly prudence and decency; and which consequently might as well have been produced by the truth addressing the mind from those other quarters. Before the change be entitled to the name of Regeneration, it must be found that its

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

originating cause contained, as its principal element, the great characteristic truth of the Bible system—namely, the doctrine of a Redeemer crucified for our sins.”¹

John Angell James quotes the following:—

“There is somewhere an account, fabulous, I allow, but yet instructive, of an almond tree, of a peculiar species, endowed, it seems, with this singular property—whatever mark you shall inscribe upon the kernel of the nut when it is planted, the same will be found visibly delineated on all the leaves and fruit of the tree that spring from it. The stem being opened at first, and the intended character once carefully drawn, the rest follows of course without further application. As the tree shoots up and spreads, that original impression is displayed on every side, and multiplied into a thousand branches.

“How many rules and maxims of life might be spared could we fix upon a principle of virtue, break the stony heart, as the Scripture calls it, and inscribe the living sentiments of the love of God in the affections,—that tender but powerful part of our frame, from which our whole life and all our actions proceed, as

¹ Dr. W. Anderson, *Regeneration*, p. 115.

the tree, branches, leaves, and fruit spring out of the kernel of the almond."¹

The lesson taught by the illustration is this: There is in Regeneration a new principle, called sometimes a new nature, implanted in the heart through the belief of the truth of God's love as seen in Jesus Christ. This principle of love is inscribed on the affections by the Holy Spirit. This new nature is divine in origin and aim. The disinterested love of God develops the graces of the Christian character. Where there is a uniform, holy disposition, we may infer that the person displaying that which is Christ-like in thought, word, and deed, has been born of God. A single leaf would prove the character of the kernel.

Accepting, then, the term *new creature* as meaning less than a change of mental faculties; but a new disposition the result of Regeneration, the evidence of being born from above, it may be well again to remark that this change invariably results from faith in Christ as He is revealed in the truth of the gospel. To the anxious inquirer in the Acts, the apostle said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." All are born

¹ *Christian Charity Explained*, p. xvi.

again who are in Christ by faith. Those that are saved are regenerated. But they are saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Doctrinal distinctions are important, but they sink into insignificance compared with actual salvation.

CHAPTER VII.

REGENERATION: METHODS ECCLESIASTICAL.

THE ordinance of baptism has been the subject of endless discussion. We have to consider it as a method of Regeneration, according to the creed of the majority of Christians. The shades of meaning attached to the word Regeneration are multiplied by the interpretations of baptismal-regeneration. Many of these shades seem to be blended in the baptismal service of the Church of England, when it is judged as a whole. But the meaning of particular clauses is distinct enough. The direct inference from several sentences is that the application of water by the minister is the means of Regeneration. However, those who do not believe that infants are *guilty* of sin,

since *they* have never transgressed; and those who believe that all dying in infancy are safe in the arms of Jesus, must have private methods of interpretation of the words legally appointed to be read. Perhaps the thought that the children whom the Saviour took up into His arms and blessed were not immersed, nor sprinkled for anything we know, may expand their charity. We read "how that He commanded the children to be brought unto Him; how He blamed those that would have kept them from Him; how He exhorted all men to follow their *innocency*. Ye perceive how that by His outward gesture and deed He declared His good will toward them; for He embraced them in His arms, He laid His hands upon them and blessed them. Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will likewise favourably receive this *infant*; that He will embrace him with the arms of His mercy; that He will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of His everlasting kingdom." Many Christians who do not believe in baptismal-regeneration will consider these words of the service appropriate, as expressing the love of our Father toward every child.

Some who maintain the propriety and im-

portance of infant baptism as we do, regard the ordinance as a teaching symbol, instructive to the parents and to the congregation at the time, and to the children when they learn that they have been dedicated to the Lord. It may be a *preparatory means of Regeneration* by leading the parents to be more earnest in prayer for the growth in grace of their children, and more careful in their instruction. It may be more than this; for who can tell how soon the Spirit of truth begins to work upon the mind? The Holy God desires that all men may be holy. He cannot wish that His youngest children may fall into sin. When they grow up, as a matter of fact there is none righteous; all need the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But children trained as they should be to fear God and keep His commandments, to believe in Jesus and not to resist the Holy Spirit, are in possession of that which they could not *by nature* have. The living, purifying truths of Redemption have been in their minds *by grace* from the dawn of their intelligence.

Many in their matured experience, confirmed in the faith, know that they love the Lord and all who love Him; but they cannot tell when they were born again. That they have

been born from above is manifest by the fruits of the Spirit. Why should we hesitate to say that the explanation is to be found in the answers to the prayers of believers at the time of dedication ?

“O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in him !

“Grant that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him !

“Grant that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh.

“Regard, we beseech thee, the supplications of thy congregation ; sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin ; and grant that this child now to be baptized therein, may receive the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Many can heartily say *Amen* to these petitions in the English Service. But as a whole it has the faults of a compromise between sacramental and evangelical doctrine. These two tendencies can be traced from the Reformation ; and they are visible to-day in the Church of England. Dean Alford draws a line of

demarcation very distinctly in the following sentence. Speaking of a member of the Church of Rome, he marks the positions thus,—"His is that of traditional sacramental transmission of Christianity; mine that of individual guidance by the Holy Spirit, the promise of the covenant irrespective of any external form of Church."¹ It seems to us that the priests who hold the sacramental transmission of Christianity, and confine its blessings to those who have been connected with the Church by the rites prescribed, can logically defend baptismal Regeneration from the premises they have accepted as true. But a doctrine which is so difficult to connect with the individual guidance of the Holy Spirit must be dangerous to any Protestant church.

There is a middle position between the extremes of sacramental efficacy on the one hand, and worthlessness on the other. Infant baptism is one of the preparatory means of Regeneration. It is more than a form. It is a means of grace. When the parents regard it as a duty, and in presenting their child for baptism, desire the prayers of their Christian friends that the blessing of God may rest upon their infant, the Hearer of prayer will not fail

¹ *Alford's Life*, p. 150.

to answer. Might not the same blessings be obtained without the use of water or the formula of baptism? Even granting that they might, we answer the implied objection in the words of Hooker,—“We may well determine concerning the use of sacraments, that they serve as bonds of obedience to God, . . . regard the weakness which is in us, they are warrants for the more security of our belief; compare the receivers of them with such as receive them not, and sacraments are marks of distinction to separate God's own from strangers; so that in all these respects they are found to be most necessary.”¹

May we conclude that the cause of Regeneration is not baptism in any form, either by immersion, by pouring, or by sprinkling? These things seem to some of little importance; but they are not so regarded by many Christians. Dean Stanley quotes, in *The Eastern Church*, a summary of the doctrine held by the Abyssinian Church, amongst which are these two dogmas—²

“That unchristened children are not saved.”

“That the baptism of water is the true Regeneration.”

It is yet within the power of the rector of.

¹ *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V., p. 211.

² p. 12.

an English Church to refuse the rites of burial to an unbaptized child.¹ To-day there are some Christians who assert that children who have not been sprinkled with a little water, are on account of that shut out from the kingdom of God. But we consider it is not water-baptism which saves. Children who die in infancy are saved, not on the ground of what man has done for them, but on the ground of what Christ has done for them. The Saviour did not ask if the little ones were baptized before He suffered them to come to Him, and blessed them and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But the claims of priests to peculiar sanctity and diffusive grace are closely connected with the claims of baptismal Regeneration and the superstitious ideas of the efficacy of water-baptism. A change of method would, we see, require a change of policy. There are few Catholic doctrines so strongly supported by patristic evidence and general custom, from the days of Irenæus and Origen; accordingly the doctrine is dear to those who have Catholic instincts. The evidence of Christian antiquity is quoted as briefly as possible by Dr. John

¹ *Vide* Burial Scandal, Akenham, *The English Independent*, March 13, 1879.

Guthrie,—“Irenæus says, ‘Christ came to save all by himself; all, namely, who by Him are regenerated to God—infants and little ones, and boys, and youths, and older men. Therefore He went through every age,—being made an infant for infants,’ &c. This expression regenerated to God (*renascuntur in Deum*), considering the usage of the period and of Irenæus himself, must mean baptism. Irenæus says in another place,—“Baptism, which is Regeneration to God”—thus defining the above phrase. Even Neander, though he does not regard infant-baptism as apostolic, says,—“Regeneration and baptism are in Irenæus intimately connected; and it is difficult to conceive how the term Regeneration can be employed in reference to this age to denote anything else than baptism. If so, here is an articulate testimony of what was the prevailing doctrine and practice in the age succeeding that of the apostles.”¹

Admitting the weight of this evidence from the early fathers, we put it aside as ecclesiastical, and remember that there have been many meanings of the word Regeneration, and many wrong explanations of the spiritual fact.

If the rite of baptism was in the second

¹ *The Pædobaptists' Guide*, p. 175.

century considered an equivalent for Regeneration, then the teaching of Christ was very early misunderstood. The confusion of thought may be traced to the free use of the word Regeneration in connection with Christian baptism. The fact that persons were born again was declared by the rite of baptism; but the method of Regeneration, as understood by the primitive church, was by repentance and remission of sins. In the first *Apology* of Justin Martyr, we find words which point to the evangelical conditions of the new creation, and connect Regeneration with baptism. He says,—“I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God *when we had been made new through Christ*; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanations we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, *and are regenerated* in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ,

and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water."¹

Now, it may be argued that the act of baptism is here spoken of as the means of Regeneration. But the context shows that conversion, faith, and obedience were deemed indispensable. Justin Martyr quotes Isaiah i. 16-20, and gives "for the rite learned from the apostles this reason," . . . "that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge." The spiritual fact can be accounted for, when the person "who chooses to be born again" has repented of his sins and believed in the mercy of God revealed by Christ.

But with the growth of priestcraft the tendency was to exalt the importance of ritual and to lower the evangelical conditions, until faith and obedience were kept out of sight, and water-baptism became the ecclesiastical method of Regeneration. The water, however, had to receive its regenerating power from the person administering it in baptism; and many opinions were entertained about the efficacy of the rite if administered by a private Christian or a heretic.

¹ Chapter 61, p. 59, Ante-Nicene Library.

The Church of Rome has allowed different schools to teach different views of baptism. For a century or two it was a matter of debate if baptism was effectual when administered by a heretic. Pope Stephen admitted the validity of heretical baptism; but in maintaining this he was going contrary to the theological authorities, contrary to the opinions of Cyprian, Cyril, and Clement of Alexandria, and almost "against the whole Christian world." The argument from expediency gained force as heretics became more numerous, and for the extension of the church it was seen best to allow the validity of heretical baptism. The *Spectator*¹ argues from this that there is no final guide in matters of religious conviction, inferring that the Church of Rome was not an authority; for, according to the confession of Father Newman in his latest edition of his *Via Media*, different views of baptism were held, and therefore that this church was not infallible, and was not worthy of blind submission or intelligent adhesion. For Father Newman admits that all the higher theological authorities were on the wrong side on baptism, in so far at least as they opposed the view which the church accepted after a century or

¹ p. 1492.

two of discussion. It is now admitted that baptism is effectual, even if administered in due form by a heretic. Some of the English ritualists may need to be reminded of this Catholic doctrine.

Independents can take this comfort from these facts, that since so many authorities are allowed to have been wrong, the others, supposed at present to be right, may likewise be wrong. For in the exercise of our private judgment we have come to the conclusion that the thing which saves is not water-baptism in any form; that water-baptism is not effectual to salvation by whomsoever administered, whether by Pope or priest of the Roman Church, by Bishop or priest of the English Church.

We need to claim the right of interpreting Scripture according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for we know that baptismal Regeneration has more patristic evidence and ecclesiastical authority in its favour than almost any other church-dogma. Moreover, it is defended by many Catholic instincts and hereditary attachments to ritual in the minds of thousands who are pronounced Protestants, good and able men. But on this subject we think they are wrong, and that their error can

be traced to a wrong exposition of Scripture. We hold that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that which unites us to Christ vitally, really; that to be baptized into Christ is by faith to be identified with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection; that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free,"¹ Episcopalians or Nonconformists.

In the New Testament there are various forms of purifying specified. The distinction between the outer cleansing and the inner is carefully pointed out. Baptism with water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are different, as the words of John testify,—“He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”² The distinction is clearly made at the beginning of Christ’s ministry on earth, and at the beginning of Christ’s ministry in heaven, after the resurrection.³ The external rite may be omitted and the spiritual baptism enjoyed. But true baptismal Regeneration is that of the Holy Spirit, by the

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13. ² John i. 33, 34. ³ Acts i. 5.

preaching of the gospel, by the truth as it is in Jesus; and for this water-baptism is not indispensable.

Many regard infant-baptism simply as a declaration of the fact that the child is a child of God, without attributing any special value to the rite. Believers in the Fatherhood of God would not deny that children who had not been christened were children of God. Many consider the ordinance a beautiful symbol of the work of the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out on all flesh. But they would not admit that any magical change took place in the child by virtue of the sacramental efficacy of baptism. However, believing parents are by the rite made more vividly to realise that they are responsible for the religious instruction of their children. Many Christian parents consider that their offspring are in the covenant of grace, whether baptized or not; that the children are loved by God, by the loving Redeemer who blessed the little ones, and rebuked the disciples who hindered the children from coming to Him.

The teaching power of water-baptism is important; and we believe it to be divinely commanded. "Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”¹

The rite is universally applicable wherever men and the children of men are found; and as a symbolic ordinance it is as beautiful as it is simple. We think its importance great, and its significance a help to faith; a help to parents to realise the Fatherhood of God, and the sympathy of the divine Redeemer, and the interest of the divine Spirit in the training of their children; and a help to little ones, when they come to know they have been baptized, to believe in the love of the Three-One God. Baptism supplies one motive amongst many to lead them to remain in connection with the Christian Church in which they have been educated and consecrated to God.

The Holy Spirit blesses every effort of parents to train up their children in the way they should go. Until children depart from the fold by open wickedness, proving unbelief and rebellion, we think they should be regarded as lambs of the flock of Christ, requiring to be fed, but not needing to be converted.

In a beautiful, simple letter, Dean Alford wrote thus to his little boy:—“Do not forget,

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

Ambrose, that you are God's child, and our blessed Saviour loves you; so you must be very good to mamma, and very kind to every one, and to Alice and Mary; and pray to God always that you may continue His child as long as you live, and lie in His bosom when you die. I hope, if God brings me safely, that I shall soon see my darling boy again."¹

These sentiments may be connected with faith in baptismal Regeneration; but many parents who disbelieve that dogma will admire the letter.

But let us test this ecclesiastical method by experience, by observation, and history. We shall accept uniformity of sequence as a definition of the causal law, and then, as certain effects follow certain causes, we may reason backward from the effects. Are those that are baptized in childhood so different from others that they can be easily distinguished? We think not. If any person, child or adult, who was baptized became a new creature, an argument for baptismal Regeneration might be advanced. But there is no such uniformity of sequence. How many christened children live to be hateful and hating—wicked in heart and conduct? It may be said that they have

¹ *Life of Alford*, p. 144.

departed from Christ and become reprobates through misconduct. But the question is, have they ever come to Christ? have they ever been born again? There is no evidence that they are new creatures.

The effect of baptism was tried by Charlemagne when he carried out the compulsory education of the Saxons, strongly wedded as they were at that time to their gods Thor and Odan. He, by force of arms, got these German tribes persuaded to renounce their idolatry. But Alcuin did not approve of this method of conversion without the teaching of the truth. For nearly thirty years the struggle was carried on, until the Saxon chiefs at the end of the eighth century submitted to be baptized, and their people followed their example.

Shall we take this as a test of baptismal Regeneration? Then let us accept the testimony of Archbishop Trench. He says,—“No doubt such conversion of nations in a mass must often, and for the larger number, have been a merely external form with no internal reality to correspond. Indeed, it was often no better with their chiefs who led the way. *Some of the most hideous perfidies, treacheries, and murders of Clovis belong to a period*

subsequent to his baptism; and his sons and grandsons, Christians by profession, do not seem to have unlearned a single heathen vice, or to have learned a single Christian virtue. Yet with the frankest admission of all this, it must not be left out of sight that where this wholesale conversion was followed up, as it was in the case of the Saxons, with earnest conscientious efforts to bring the converts, not nominally only but in truth, within the Church's fold, much was hereby done, or was put in the way of being done. . . . Schools, churches, and monasteries were built; bishoprics were founded; . . . there went forward a ministry of the Word and Sacraments."¹

We infer that the national reformation and the Regeneration of the individuals, when real, were the result of faith in the word of truth; and that the ritual baptism of the multitudes was worth next to nothing. No method of evangelising the world can compare in rapidity of possible progress with this ecclesiastical method of making Christians by compulsory water-baptism. But external, mechanical appliances have never yet been proved to change the heart. It takes spiritual causes to bring out spiritual results.

¹ *Mediæval Church History*, p. 70.

What is there in common in baptism and in Regeneration to account for the frequent allusions to both, and the reasonings by way of analogy from the one to the other? We need to set aside the high doctrine of sacramental efficacy in baptism before we admit that there may be Regeneration without baptism; and there may be baptism, by immersion or otherwise, without Regeneration. If we define the thing signified by the rite of baptism to be the change produced by the Holy Spirit in the soul of the believer, then Regeneration is just the name applied to that spiritual change of which baptism is the external symbol. The inference is plain from this definition; for the symbol, as a declaration that the person is born again, should not precede the belief of the truth, since the spiritual change is a consequent of the reception of Christ as the personal Saviour: but the accuracy of the inference depends on the definition of baptism. The rite as a symbolical ordinance of the Church has been extended to children in their innocence, before that they are capable of rejecting or accepting Christ. It is regarded, then, as teaching the need of purity. To those who believe in the universal work or general influence of the Holy Spirit, the ordinance of

baptism points to the Divine Agent as poured out on all.¹ Purifying divine influence has been provided for all, and the water poured out impresses on the minds of the parents the spiritual reality taught by the symbolic ordinance—that our Father God loves the child, that the Saviour claims the little one as a member of the kingdom of heaven, and that the Holy Spirit is ready to bless every effort to teach the child the gospel, and when the child has developed, to confirm the youth in the faith.

Baptism so regarded does not teach that the person baptizing directly confers a blessing, or that the child baptized by means of the water receives a blessing. Since the Lord is that Spirit, and the “true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,”² the child baptized shares in the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit; and being claimed as a member of the kingdom of God, the parents are encouraged and comforted by the thought of the love and help of the Three-One God. But regarded in this light the relation which baptism bears to Regeneration is only that of teaching the fact of the purifying work of the Holy Spirit. If not baptized, the child

¹ Acts ii. 17.

² John i. 9.

shares in this universal grace; if baptized, the prayers of the faithful, and the obedience of the parents, increase the spiritual blessings to the child, making faith more easy and wickedness more difficult. Whatever the influence of the Spirit be upon the minds of infants, we believe that after the time when responsibility begins, that influence always is moral, and therefore may be resisted.

Apart from the sacramental mould into which the thoughts of Hooker were poured, the ideas of the judicious divine can be approved. But the following seem to imply that Christ Jesus is imparted by the rite, so that baptism is the cause and Regeneration the effect:—"Yet then doth baptism challenge to itself but the inchoation of these graces, the consummation whereof dependeth on mysteries ensuing. We receive Christ Jesus in baptism once, as the first beginner; in the Eucharist often, as being by continual degrees the Finisher of our life. By baptism therefore we receive Christ Jesus, and from Him that saving grace which is proper unto baptism."¹

The natural inference is that the grace received is saving grace, in the same way as other Protestants speak of saving faith when

¹ *Ecc. Polity*, p. 211.

Christ is received through belief of the truth of the gospel. The modern sacramental school, favouring ritualism, makes Regeneration to depend on baptism.

Dr. Onslow puts the other side into a strong light when he says:—"If this sacramental notion of the Romanised school of theology be *true*, then the teaching of the Bible on the subject of the new birth is *false*; for the two views are diametrically opposed the one to the other. . . . We hesitate not to pronounce the Romish dogma of sacramental grace—the Papistical doctrine of baptismal Regeneration—to be the pre-eminent lie of Satan, the most subtle and fatal weapon which this arch-foe of our race ever forged for the destruction of men's souls in perdition."¹

The relation of baptism and Regeneration has been by some found in the fact of membership—the spiritual adherence of the believer to Christ being declared by the initiatory rite. The author of *Ecce Homo* says,—“Men were not to make a light thing of entering into the Theocracy, to give their names to the founder at a secret interview, and immediately return to their accustomed places of resort, and take up the routine of secular life where it had

¹ *Born Again*, p. 29.

been left. *Those who would enrol themselves among the citizens of it were to understand that they began their life anew, as truly as if they had been born again. And lest the Divine Society, in its contempt for material boundaries and for the distinctness which is given by unity of place, should lose its distinctness altogether, and degenerate into a theory or a sentiment, or a devout imagination, the initiatory rite of baptism, with its publicity and formality, was pronounced as indispensable to membership, as that spiritual inspiration which is membership itself.*"¹

Regeneration is a change of thought, feeling, and purpose, produced by faith in Christ. "The spiritual inspiration which is membership," is a description of the effects of faith. It is simply the changed disposition called Regeneration, the beginning in the human spirit of the life which springs from Christ, regarded as an inspiration, an impulse to Christ-like enthusiasm for humanity. In some degree this is found in every true believer. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he ;" and when right thoughts of Christ are in the mind, then the life of faith has begun ; and Regeneration is then a fact whether the

¹ *Ecce Homo*, p. 82.

person has been baptized or not. Unless we define baptism to be the influence of the Spirit of God, it seems to us to have no direct relation to Regeneration. The rite of baptism by water is neither the cause nor the occasion of Régénération. However, the word baptism is so often associated with water, that the thing signified is drowned in the sign. The influence of the Holy Spirit is not brought before the mind by the word baptism; unless the teacher be careful to point out that "the washing of Regeneration" is just "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," and being equal to *even* in Titus iii. 5. Incidental clauses which explain the spiritual fact have been so interpreted that the secondary clause and the illustration have been put in the place of the primary idea. The outer symbol intended to teach the unseen agency of the Spirit of God has been, by methods ecclesiastical, made a veil instead of a revelation. The holy water has been so electrified by sacramental grace theories, and so attracted attention, that the purifying agency of the Spirit—the true baptism which alone is efficacious in renewing the soul—has received no attention. The need of Regeneration has not been perceived by many ecclesiastics.

CHAPTER VIII.

REGENERATION: METHODS SPIRITUAL AND SACRAMENTAL.

THE man who finds everything in this world as clear as daylight must have a mind remarkable for transparency or obscurity. He is either very acute or very obtuse. Nothing may seem mysterious when there is not curiosity enough to inquire into processes and causes. The facts of change in matter and in mind may be known by any observer of phenomena. But the student soon finds the limits of thought, the mental horizon which divides the known from the unknown. There is a veil over all the secrets of nature. The Great Worker hides His glory. He continues to labour, neither slumbering nor sleeping. But who can find out the Almighty, immanent in all His works, omnipresent and omniscient? In all life there is a mystery. The sculptor may bring out of the marble a statue beautiful in form, every feature of the face and every

part of the body as perfect as art demands. But it is cold and dead. It wants one thing. The art of man cannot give life. The mechanist, by ingenious contrivances, may make a calculating machine, and by clock-work produce movements very like those of the human body. But the best automaton wants one thing—life.

There was much talk at one time of spontaneous generation ; but science still affirms that all living beings, however small, come from living beings, and not from dead matter. The mystery of life is behind the veil. But the effects of life, of growth and development, are easily perceived ; and of late the organs and functions of all plants and animals have been carefully studied. In certain circumstances it is well known that corn will grow. Under certain conditions animals thrive. Valuable information has been obtained by medical men about the laws of health, and they can tell much that is necessary to human life.

Ministers can tell, in like manner, much that is needful to spiritual life. But there is something incomprehensible. However, we need not marvel that to our ignorance so much is unknown. Thomas Carlyle points out that a blade of grass may be a

window to the infinite. There is room for a philosophy of the unconscious. There is a region within us which reflection cannot penetrate. But God is there. When the conduct and the character become Christ-like, when a man overcometh the world,¹ when his deeds are good, his words true and kind, his heart, so far as man can judge, pure—we know that he is born from above. We infer that he has been baptized by Jesus, who alone can baptize with the Holy Ghost. We may, from what has been revealed, be quite certain that the word of God, the truth of the gospel, has been the means of enlightenment. The passage of Scripture may have been forgotten; the verse of the hymn, or the remarks of the friend, may have slipped from the memory. But just as we infer that ships seen in a dry dock have not dropped down from the sky, but have been floated into the position they occupy by one channel, and through the same gateway before the tide ebbed; so in like manner do we conclude, that every one having peace with God, who is a new creature in Christ Jesus, has come to the knowledge of the truth through Him who is the way, the truth, the life. "Neither is there salvation in

¹ 1 John v. 4.

any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”¹

But our certainty about the method does not enable us to penetrate into the mystery of Regeneration. We see the effects of the working of the Holy Spirit, just as we see the leaves and the branches shaken by the wind. The cause is invisible. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”² We can judge of the operations of the cause by what we see of the effects.

But inferences from these words which are drawn from the inconstancy and changeableness of the wind are, we think, erroneous. The power of the Holy Spirit is a constant force. As Dr. Caird puts it, “a wind ever blowing, a stream ever flowing.”

There is much that is mysterious in Regeneration ; but if a man is not born again, it is not owing to the absence of the Holy Spirit, or the unwillingness of God to save ; but owing to the man's ignorance of the truth, or his unwillingness to obey the gospel com-

¹ Acts iv. 12.

² John iii. 8.

mand, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."¹

But the agency of the Holy Spirit being acknowledged, we endeavour to discover the conditions favourable to Regeneration, that we may know what is mysterious and what is intelligible. In the vision of the dry bones in the valley the stirring comes after the preaching. The Spirit of God employs the agency of man to declare the truth. We admit that talking about life cannot quicken the dead into new life. But those who have ears to hear are not dead, like corpses. Their attention can be arrested, and their intelligence enlightened.

The subject of study—Regeneration—is made mysterious, because writers of different schools employ the same phraseology. For instance, Robert Hall says,—“Christians are not their own, and the method by which God claims and appropriates them to himself is that of regenerating grace.”²

What is this grace? Is it spiritual or sacramental? Is it a special form of divine power different from that which is in the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? No. We may speak

¹ Acts xvi. 31.

² Vol. V., p. 130.

of justifying grace and sanctifying grace. But if these are not modes of divine influence similar in kind but distinguished by their effects, we ask what is grace, and what are the qualities which make it regenerating, justifying, sanctifying? Grace is a form of divine love. It has the energy of love. It is made known by the word of truth—the gospel. Whoever believes the gospel is saved, experiences regenerating grace through faith in Jesus. God is love.

“ His doctrine is almighty love ;
There's virtue in His name,
To turn the raven to a dove,
The lion to a lamb.”

The means of renewal is the word of truth. The central word of all truth in the Bible is Christ, the Saviour of the world. Of all gifts from above the best is the gift of God's dear Son. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”¹ Everything which teaches us concerning Jesus, the meaning of His mission, of His life and atoning death, teaches us some of the truth. Bible knowledge without Christ has no special value. Truth without Christ has no special influence. But the word of truth—the truth of the propitiation for our

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 15.

sins—has a special adaptation to the sinner. The Spirit of truth employs it in Regeneration—"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth."¹

When we inquire what is the grace imparted in Regeneration, we are brought again face to face with sacramental doctrine.

Is there anything communicated by the sacraments more than by ordinary Scriptural instruction? Hooker states both sides of the question judiciously:—"For where the Word of God may be heard, which teacheth with much more expedition, and more full explanations, anything we have to learn; if all the benefit we reap by sacraments be instruction, they which at all times have opportunity of using the better means to that purpose will surely hold the worse in less estimation. And unto infants which are not capable of instruction, who would not think it a mere superfluity that any sacrament be administered, if to administer the sacraments be but to teach receivers what God doth for them. There is of sacraments, therefore, undoubtedly some other more excellent and heavenly use. . . .

"Christ and His holy Spirit, with all their blessed effects, though entering into the soul

¹ James i. 18.

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we are not able to apprehend or know how, do notwithstanding give notice at the times when they use to make their prayers because it pleaseth Almighty God to communicate by sensible means those blessings which are incomprehensible. Seeing, therefore, that grace is a consequent of sacraments, a blessing which accompanieth them as their end, a benefit which they have received from God Himself, the Author of sacraments, and not from any other natural or supernatural quality in them, it may be hereby both understood that sacraments are necessary, and that the manner of their necessity to life supernatural is not in all respects as food unto natural life, because they contain *in themselves* no vital force or efficacy; they are not physical but *moral instruments* of salvation; duties of service and worship, which, unless we perform as the Author of grace requireth, they are unprofitable. For all receive not the grace of God which receive the sacraments of His will. Neither is it *ordinarily* His will to bestow the grace of sacraments on any but the faithful; which grace also they that receive by sacraments or with sacraments receive from Him, and not from them." ¹

After all, for anything we know, the grace of God through sacraments or through the word may be the same divine influence. When emphasis is put upon the sacraments as *moral instruments*, means of the grace imparted through them, and only effectual when the recipient is in a right moral condition, we find no fault with the doctrine, except that it tends to withdraw the attention from the gospel—the glad tidings of salvation, and favours the superstition of some physical gift imparted through the rites no matter how observed. Is there no danger of conveying the impression to some ignorant of theology that grace is a separate divinity, when instead of speaking of the moral influence of God exerted upon the mind of man, there is a continual reference to grace, grace, without any definition of the word, or any distinct idea of its meaning? We consider regenerating grace means the influence of the Holy Spirit as experienced by believers in Jesus.

Protestant churches which agree in things essential, regard the sacraments from different standpoints. Many would hesitate to say that the sacraments were the only channels of regenerating grace, while affirming that they ought to be held in honour as divine ordin-

ances. In themselves they have no efficacy. They may carry grace as a wire transmits electricity; but without the operations of the divine Spirit and the human spirit, there would be no blessing. For the external sign receives its value from the thing signified. The intelligence is enlightened by perceiving the meaning of the symbol. The things which are seen and felt by the senses in the sacraments may have a special adaptation for exciting currents of thought in the minds of believers. The metal aluminum is said to have double the conducting power of iron in telegraphy. Words have not sometimes half the power we desire.

The distinctions of Turretine have a value. We shall state some briefly. Of the external sign he says,—It is the element appointed by God for signifying and sealing grace: Of the internal and intelligible part of the sacrament,—It is the grace of God in Christ, or Christ with all His benefits.¹ . . . But the union

¹ *Materia sacramenti duplex est: alia externa et sensibilis, alia interna et intelligibilis—illa signum, haec signatum dicitur. Illa percipitur sensibus corporis et imprimis visu; ista verò mente præditâ idoneo ad id instrumento scilicet fide. Illa est elementum à Deo institutum ad significandam et obsignandam gratiam. Ista est gratia Dei in Christo, seu Christus cum omnibus suis beneficiis.* . . . X.

of the sign with the thing signified does not consist *naturally* through contact, nor *locally*, nor *spiritually* through spiritual energy by which the symbols are vivified; neither is the *power of Regeneration* nor of justification in themselves. But the union is relative and sacramental, being placed chiefly in three things, in the meaning, the sealing, and the exhibition.¹

God alone is the efficient cause of the sacraments; because He is alone the Author of the promise and of the covenant of grace: to Him belongs the promising and the giving of grace; the sealing of it likewise is His: God alone is the Author of the Word, therefore also of the sacraments, which are the visible Word.²

¹ *Forma sacramenti posita est in analogia. . . . In hac analogia consistit unio signi cum signato, quæ proinde nec est naturalis per contactum corporeum, nec localis per indistantiam, nec etiam spiritualis per spirituales insignes,* quæ signa immediatè viviscentur, aut ipsis præbeatur vis regenerandi, aut justificandi; sed est *relativa* et sacramentalis in tribus maximè posita, significatione, obsignatione, et exhibitione. . . . XII.

² *Efficiens sacramentorum est solus Deus. 1. Quia solus est ille autor promissionis et foederis gratiæ. Cujus est autem promittere et dare gratiam, ejus etiam est eam obsignare. 2. Deus solus est autor verbi, ergo et sacramentorum, quæ sunt verbum visibile. 3. Quia sunt pars cultus divini, quia solo Deo institui potest. . . . XIV.*

—*Turretini Theologia*, Vol. III., pp. 378, 379, ed. 1696.

The main point to observe amongst all the subtle distinctions of the sacramental controversy is this, that regenerating grace, the power of Regeneration, is the power of God acting through the word.

The truth of the gospel, the central fact of atonement—Christ with all His benefits—is apprehended by the help of some symbol, of sight, of sound, of touch, of taste. The words of Scripture, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper have a special adaptation for conveying truth. But the instrument of Regeneration is the word of God in some form. Beyond this we cannot see clearly, speculate as we may. Every cause is invisible. We judge of the power exerted by means of the changes which result from it.

The ordinary changes are not marvellous, because we do not feel any surprise at common phenomena. But every one of the effects we call natural takes us back to a cause we may call spiritual; for they are related to a general order, and to the great First Cause. We cannot deny the force of the wind. We may not know the law of its action. Nicodemus did not. But if he had thought of the cause of the changes of cloud and tempest he would have found food for wonder. In the study

of the great change called Regeneration we find some conditions clearly stated, and behind these the wonderful.¹ We ought to expect this from ordinary limits of human thought. Jesus said,—“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”² The change is spiritual both in cause and effect.

When the soul has never been stirred with love for things pure and good, we may conclude that Regeneration has not taken place. When the divine love has been *only* feebly perceived, and the emotions have *only* been stirred like the surface of a lake furrowed by a passing breeze, we may infer that the soul has not been born of the Spirit. It may have been moved; waves of feeling may have been the result of kind words, of dread warnings, of fervent appeals, or quiet meditation; but we are not warranted to infer from transitory emotions or sensations that a saving change has taken place. When the soul becomes conscious of the contamination of sin, there may be a struggle against evil begun by a resolve to reform; there may be a fluttering of wings, like

¹ Ps. cxxxix, 14; Job v. 9; Ps. cvii, 21. ² John iii. 8.

the flight of birds under a net, efforts to rise frustrated by a thousand meshes of evil habit; but the excitement of effort to free self is not emancipation from sin.

There may be even a knowledge of the history and principles of Christianity, a preference for this religion, and a wish to follow Christ—without any saving change worthy of the name Regeneration. There may be a coming to Christ in the church and in the sacraments; there may be a profession of faith in the miracles of Christ, and in all the doctrines of the church, and yet the higher life may be unknown, because the soul has not been born from above. There may be good resolutions, good habits, the signs of divine influence at work—the “sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, and a going forth to battle”¹—yet no thorough change of heart, no deep conviction of sin, no repentance unto life, no yielding to the converting influences of the Holy Spirit, no clear perception of the gospel, and no faith in Jesus as the personal Saviour.

The knowledge of the truth of the gospel implies the agency of the Holy Spirit both in the mind of the person knowing and in the

¹ 1 Chron. xiv. 15.

mind of the person first communicating the truth. Messages from men may go to those who are far away from the sender of the message. But the receiver of the glad tidings of salvation is not far away from God. The Spirit of God always accompanies His word. If the word is nigh thee, God is still nearer. Language fails to express the relation of the soul to God. We are sustained in being by Divine power; and we cannot come to the knowledge of the truth without the Divine Spirit. Wherever the gospel is preached the Spirit of truth is present; and bare truth is not the agency in Regeneration. We may speak of mathematical truth as bare, because it expresses abstract relations. But gospel truth is never bare.

If we were abstracting the influence of the Spirit of God from the words of the gospel, then the bare words would be ineffectual to salvation. Gunpowder by itself would have no effect upon rock, except to blacken it. But fire applied to the powder would cause an explosion. Bare gunpowder would be ineffectual, and so would bare truth be, if it were possible to separate truth from its Author. But we hold that God always is in the truth of the gospel, that He is the agent immanent

in the instrument He employs. To those who find these subtle distinctions difficult to perceive, we would say God is truth, and where truth is God is in power. Instead of keeping the supernatural influence in the background, as the term "bare truth" does, we prefer to give all the honour to God—the Spirit of truth. He is invisible. His agency is incomprehensible.

But the knowledge of the truth is a proof of God's presence in the soul of the believer. When we hear the vibration of the wire (as any one may hear the sound thereof near a telegraph post when there is wind enough to move the wire), we infer that the sound is the result of the wind striking the wire. In like manner when the prayerless man becomes devout, when the impure becomes pure, when the dishonest becomes honest, when the passionate becomes calm, when the godless becomes pious—the change gives proof of the agency of the Holy Spirit, although the Divine presence is invisible and incomprehensible. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We can infer from the effects of the wind that the wind is blow-

ing. When we see in a regatta some of the boats becalmed, and some of them at a little distance with the sails well filled and the spray dashing from the bows as they rapidly move through the water, we say at once there is a breeze yonder where the yachts are making rapid progress. But those on board no more see the wind than the observer at a distance. But they feel it. They know it is blowing. So is it with every one who is making progress in spiritual life.

The analogy, however, fails if we consider that the influence of the Spirit is partial and fitful like the breezes on the Clyde on a summer day. When there is no progress, we blame man not God. The Spirit is ever ready to bless, to give power to those who receive Jesus to be sons of God, even to those who believe on His name. We agree with the Rev. Thomas Green in regarding the Spirit's influence as constant. "We live in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. No second day of Pentecost can ever be needed, for the influence given on that day will never cease, and suffers no diminution. The Holy Spirit does not come and go. . . . There is no new Word, no new ordinances, no new Spirit. The sense of *waiting* for some external impulse to arouse

the drowsy faculties is, I believe, much encouraged by the expectations that too often gather around mission and revival services. The 'revival' which is thus postponed, and which consequently very often does not come at all, would visit the stagnant heart at once did it realise that there is nothing whatever to be waited for on God's part, neither revelation nor instrumentality."¹

Granting that in Regeneration there may be a method both sacramental and spiritual, we ought to remember that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."² The soul born again has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the beloved Son, "in whom we have redemption (through His blood), even the forgiveness of sins."³ The sacrament of the Lord's Supper reminds us most vividly of this central fact of redemption, and through it the truth may be spiritually discerned. But the method of complete deliverance is thus stated by "Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . If the

¹ *The Congregationalist*, p. 98, Feb. 1879.

² Cor. iii. 17.

³ Col. i. 13, 14.

Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."¹

CHAPTER IX.

REGENERATION: METHODS MORAL NOT SACRAMENTAL.

THE Bible in teaching the duty of repentance, does not attribute to change of thought, by the simple exercise of attention, the act or results of Regeneration. The influence of the Spirit of God, the will of God, the instruments provided by God, are mentioned again and again. But the compliance of man with the conditions of Regeneration is one of the factors in the process. God respects the choice of man. He is not forced to receive the truth. He is asked in every tone, from threatening to entreaty. But of many besides the sinners of Jerusalem the Divine Redeemer has to say, "I would, but ye would not."²

There are some who overlook the Divine Agent in Regeneration in exalting the human agent. The apostle who speaks most strongly of the denial of the Son, says, "If ye know

¹ John viii. 31-36.

² Luke xiii. 34.

that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.”¹

This practical proof of Regeneration enlarges our charity. Before the coming of Christ all true believers in God, like Abraham, were born again. The righteous have ever lived by faith. We cannot doubt that multitudes who have not had the gospel, as we know it, preached to them, have yet been saved and sanctified by obeying the truth as it was revealed to them. They have seen the goodness of God in the rain and sunshine, and in the mercy of God have trusted, with more faith in the propitiousness of Jehovah than many who have professed to believe that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.² Doers of the word are better far than hearers who are disobedient.

The apostle John wrote,—“This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God : and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him.”³

There is some difficulty experienced by those who wish to be just and charitable. “De Maistre saw no salvation for fallen human

¹ 1 John ii. 20.

² 1 Cor. xv. 3.

³ 1 John v. 1.

nature out of Christianity, which seemed to him to exist in original purity only in the Catholic Church, because there alone all things were reduced to the principle of authority."¹

Many Protestant theologians make a small number of select persons *the regenerate*; and in their scheme of doctrine reduce everything to the principle of sovereignty. They see no salvation for any beyond the limited number for whom, as they think, Christ died, and with whom alone the Spirit strives effectually. These theological opponents of the Roman Catholic Church consider the authority of the Pope worthless, but they are inclined to claim infallibility for their own interpretation of the doctrine of predestination.

The exclusive assumptions of both extreme parties appear to us unscriptural; "For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."²

Can we doubt that many persons are the objects of the divine mercy who have not heard the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? They are blessed for His sake when they walk in the light of the revelation of God in nature and providence; when they perceive that Our

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, p. 225. ² Rom. x. 12, 13.

Father is good unto all and propitious to them. They will be judged by Him who knows all their opportunities and how they have improved them. What shall we say of the opponents of church creeds? "We do not admit," says the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, "that the dissent or only faint and partial adhesion of these exceptional human beings to the ancient creed of the Christian Church, detracts from its first authority; but we should be slow to charge the inadequacy of their doctrinal conceptions upon moral defect; or to deny the truth, force, and value of the heart service which they may and do render with affectionate humility to their Father and their God. The Christian dogma is the ordained means of generating and sustaining the religious life; but the Almighty is not tied to the paths He marks out for His servants, and we are nowhere authorised to say there can be no religious life, except as the direct product of the Christian dogma in its entirety."¹

What is the minimum amount of knowledge which suffices as the instrument of Regeneration may not be easy to determine. If it be as small as a grain of mustard seed it will grow. But the proof of the kind of knowledge

¹ *Gleanings of Past Years*, Vol. I., pp. 56, 57.

is found in the fruit which springs from it. Only good seed can produce a good crop. But the parable of the sower teaches us that bad ground and bad management may counteract the good which should spring from the seed of the word. The truth of the divine mercy to sinners seems to us essential to Regeneration. The full-orbed gospel of the grace of God ought to be believed.¹ But when much of it is eclipsed by traditional error, there may be enough seen to enlighten the mind in the knowledge of Christ.

The duty of repentance every one admits to be inculcated in Scripture; but the duty of Regeneration seems a new phrase with a novelty more likely to suggest error than truth to some minds. But the two duties are closely related, as we see in the words of Ezekiel, xviii. 30-32,—“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death

¹ 1 Pet. i. 21-25.

of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

The duty of being born again implies power to do what is ordered, and points out that obedience, concurrence, is an indispensable condition of Regeneration. All who obey the command will find the divine help they need.

Regeneration by the power of an ideal moral example is often advocated. But this alone is insufficient. "We must be won over from our worldly lusts and our animal propensities, by engaging *our hearts* on higher objects. We must learn a lesson in practical morals from the youth who is redeemed from rude boyhood and coarse selfishness by love. We must allow the latent spark of moral desire to be fanned into a flame, and, by the enkindling admiration of a human beauty above the plane of character hitherto attained by man, to consume away the animal dross and prepare for new environments that may be in store for us. What student does not know how the heat of love for truth not yet attained breaks up a heap of prejudices and fixed ideas, and gives a sort of molecular instability to the mind, preparing it for the most surprising transformations? Who has not observed the development of almost a new

eye for colour, or a new ear for refinements in sound; by the mere constant repetition of a higher æsthetic ideal? And just in the same way, who that knows anything of mankind can have failed to perceive that the only successful method by which character is permanently improved, is by employing the force of example, by accumulating on the conscience reiterated touches of a new moral colour, and by bringing to bear from *above* the power of an acknowledged ideal, and (if possible) from around the simultaneous influence of a similarly affected environment? Baptize now all these truths, translate them into the ordinary current language of the Church, and you have simply neither more nor less than the Gospel of Jesus Christ."¹

But the agency of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things of Christ and making believers partakers of the Divine nature, is required in Regeneration and sanctification. Admitting that amongst the Unitarians there are many noble men and women who will compare favourably with Christians of any denomination in righteous conduct, practical piety, and enlightened philanthropy, we confess ignorance of the process of thought by which they

¹ *The Contemporary Review*, p. 233.

are born again. For everything good in the character of men of all countries and forms of faith, we give glory unto God—"the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift." But how those persons who have the New Testament, who seem to reject the Saviour as the Divine Redeemer, can be regenerated, is a problem we cannot solve. They seem to us to wilfully separate themselves from the instructions of the Holy Spirit, to depend on the exertion of their own powers of thought and choice, to rely more on discipline and self-control, than on any influence from above.

Dean Alford in a letter to one of his converts who had become perplexed by the writings of Dr. Channing, says—"You should remember that you and he do not start from the same point, and therefore how much eloquence soever he may expend on his argument it does not touch yours. He starts on the supposition that human nature can renew itself; you, on the fact that human nature is lost and helpless. He sees no divine interference necessary, you feel that without it none could be saved. He acknowledges not the ruin brought in by the first *Adam*, and therefore cannot have any idea of the life and purity introduced into our

nature by the glorious indwelling of the *second*—even the eternal Son of God.”¹

This brings out the points of contrast between the convictions of Unitarians and Christians. The term Regeneration may be employed by both; but it must mean one thing to a person who has no faith in the merits of Christ and the personal influence of the Holy Spirit—quite a different thing to a person believing in the interest and co-operation of Father, Son, and Spirit.

So long as the change of purpose revolves about self, so long the change stops short of Regeneration. There may be reformation—*e.g.*, a drunkard may become an abstainer; a thief may steal no more. But the change of thought, feeling, and choice which is brought about by faith in Christ is more thorough than any reformation resulting from selfish motives. How often good resolutions are broken! How often those that wish to do right do wrong! The tendency of the Socinian system is thus stated by Robert Hall, with great clearness and force:—

“It extenuates the evil of sin and the magnitude of the danger to which it exposes the sinner, and is calculated to weaken beyond

¹ *Life of Dean Alford*, p. 127.

expression the force of these motives. . . . By asserting the intrinsic efficacy of repentance, to the exclusion of the merits of the Redeemer, it makes every man his own saviour; it directs his attention to himself as the source to which he ascribes the removal of guilt and the renovation of hope; nor will it permit him to adopt in any obvious and intelligible sense the rapturous language of the redeemed, 'To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' Taught to consider the Lord Jesus in no other light than as the most perfect example, and the most enlightened of teachers, and believing that He has already bestowed all the benefits He is empowered to bestow, it is in vain to look for the consecration of the heart to His love, and of all the faculties of body and mind to His service, which may reasonably be expected from him who looks upon himself as a trophy of His power and as the purchase of His blood. Not viewing himself as at any time exposed to condemnation, you must not expect him to celebrate with elevated emotion the riches of divine grace, much less that he should be transported with gratitude to God for the inestimable love evinced in the gift of His Son, when he considers it a high attainment

to have learned that this Son is a mere man on a level with himself. The unhappy disciple of this system is necessarily separated and cut off from the objects most adapted to touch the springs of religious sensibility.”¹

However, there are many who do not deny that Christ is the Messiah who are unable to accept the doctrine of the Trinity and the Atonement. We regret that they do not believe as we believe; but it cannot be said that they cut themselves off from God, if the following be common sentiments amongst modern Unitarians.

“The mind, when baptized with the worshipful spirit, gains ampler trust in the guidance of its larger thoughts, because it lays no claim to personal property in them, and recognises their authority as dependent upon the truth which is above itself, and must be humbly followed and obediently served. It is not that we have discovered the secret of God, but that the light of God has fallen upon us. It is not that we have chosen Christ, but that Christ has chosen us. It is not that an opinion is ours, but that it arrests and commands us. It is not that we have enlightened views, but that the gospel of the grace of God has

¹Vol. V., pp. 137, 138.

searched out our hearts, and smote us as with a two-edged sword."¹

Still the difference is infinite between the position of those who worship Christ as the Divine Redeemer, as God-incarnate, and those who refuse to admit that truth. The word of God, which is able to save the soul, is the full-orbed gospel of the grace of God as preached by the apostles.

It is the means of Regeneration. We need not further consider if repentance by itself can produce Regeneration; for, in our opinion, there can be no true repentance without the influence of the Spirit of God; and only by the testimony of God can any man know that Jesus is the Messiah. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." The central truth of Redemption cannot be isolated from the truths around it without loss. Instead of trying to determine what minimum amount of knowledge of the grace of God revealed in Christ is the condition of Regeneration, it will be better to know all the Bible teaches of divine love and human responsibility.

In his treatise on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, as delivered in the Scriptures,

¹ *Baptism of the Holy Spirit.* By H. W. Crosskey.

Locke says, "It is clear that the faith which God counted to Abraham for righteousness was nothing but a firm belief of what God declared to him, and a steadfast relying on Him for the accomplishment of what He had promised.¹ . . . The law of faith then, in short, is for every one to believe what God requires him to believe, as a condition of the covenant he makes with him; and not to doubt of the performance of His promise."²

He then asks the question, what are we now required to believe? and he expresses it in the confession of Peter—"We believe and are sure that thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." He says, "This preaching of Jesus as the Messiah is called the Word of God, and believing is receiving the word of God."³

Is this the minimum amount of knowledge essential to Regeneration? The historical faith needs the moral forces to operate on the heart through love to God, and devotion to Christ.

"That love shall vainer loves expel,
That fear all fears beside."

Receiving the truth, obeying the truth, not

¹ Rom. iv. 3, 18-22.

² Vol. II., p. 517.

³ Acts xi. 1, 19-20; xv. 7.

resisting the Spirit, not trusting in self-righteousness—believing in Christ as wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption¹—these are conditions of Regeneration. But it is as a little child that the most learned receive the truth at first. The methods of Regeneration are the means employed to bring the truth of the gospel into the mind. Essentially the truth is the same. It is the incorruptible seed. It is a vital germ of spiritual life. The Spirit of God works by the truth believed. He is where the truth is not ; but the truth never is where He is not.

CHAPTER X.

REGENERATION : METHODS PROVIDENTIAL AND EVANGELICAL.

IN Regeneration there may be preparatory processes of thought and feeling going on for hours, days, months, years—of which the subject may know little. The means employed by the Spirit of God to bring about the new-birth may not be observed. We can see the

¹1 Cor. i. 30.

bud for the next Spring when the leaves fall in Autumn; but the processes of development are all latent. The germ of life is protected by thick scales, gummed so as to protect the tender fibres from the cold. When the sunshine warms the air, the buds expand, there is new life in every branch; the green leaves and bright flowers give evidence that the preparatory work of the former summer has not been in vain. But a hasty observer might conclude that the new life was a sudden outburst of beauty from dead wood, from trees which in winter seemed without life, without leaves, without a fringe of green on the dark bark.

Can Regeneration take place without thought? Belief of the truth is thinking as God desires. This kind of thinking is essential to Regeneration. The change at conversion is often very remarkable; but the preparatory process and links of thought are often forgotten. There may be room here for a philosophy of the unconscious¹ in a region not considered by Hartmann. The thoughts and feelings employed to soften the heart, to mould conviction, to promote obedience to the demands of conscience, and attention

¹ Edouard Von Hartmann, Berlin, 7th edition.

to the call to repentance, may have passed from the memory, because the habit of reflection may not have then been acquired; and the design of the preparation being unknown, the process of thought would not excite interest. The person, however, at the time would be conscious of many of the influences for good; for his yielding to their gentle power would be proof that the Spirit of God had not been resisted. But up to the time of conviction he may have been unconscious of these latent results of wooing and winning. The throes and pangs of the new-birth seem causeless, but they have a history and explanation.

The history may not have been written on the tablets of memory. But sudden spiritual changes have a possible explanation in the philosophy of the unconscious. There is a potency in the associations of early life, of parental piety, in the reminiscences of family worship and public worship. Unconscious coërbation—the result of these reminiscences—may account for many completed processes. The seeds of truth long buried, springing up in secret, unobserved, were growing in the mind. The fruits imply the roots. Faith may be regarded as a fruit of attention and truth; its turn faith is a root to the fruits

of righteousness. God answers prayer. But "He moves in a mysterious way." He knows how, but we don't.

The Cartesian philosophy of consciousness makes a broad line of distinction between the rational and instinctive. Are they closely related? Consciousness and mental action are not co-extensive. But we are not responsible for the unconscious mental processes.

There is a tendency to make all mental action automatic and unspiritual. "The more I have examined the workings of my own mind," says Mr. Francis Galton, "the less respect I feel for the part played by consciousness. I begin with others to doubt its use altogether as a helpful supervisor, and to think that my best brain-work is wholly independent of it. The unconscious operations of the mind frequently far transcend the conscious ones in intellectual importance. Sudden inspirations and those flashings out of results which cost a great deal of conscious effort to ordinary people, but are the natural outcome of what is known as genius, are undoubted products of unconscious cerebration. Conscious actions are motivated, and motives can make themselves attended to, whether consciousness be present or not. Consciousness seems to do little more

than attest the fact that the various organs of the brain do not work with perfect ease or co-operation.”¹

But what is called “unconscious cerebration” would never have been known without consciousness. We speak of night and day; but the time when there is light makes us conscious of the absence of it. So without the light of reflection, of consciousness, we could never have discovered the results attributed to “unconscious cerebration.” These results mark processes of which we have been neglectful. We cannot infer from our ignorance that we have not been able to observe. Mr. Galton himself says,—“No one can have a just idea, before he has carefully experimented upon himself, of the crowd of unheeded half-thoughts and faint imagery that flits through his brain, and of the influence they exert upon his conscious life.”²

Many of the influences resulting in Regeneration may not be observed by any individual; but we can infer the normal conditions from the generalised experience of many.

The influence of the Spirit of God may not be confined to processes of thought and feeling.

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, p. 433, March, 1879.

² *Psychometric Facts*, p. 425

We may admit that the work of the divine Spirit transcends the consciousness of the human spirit, and still maintain that reason and Scripture lead us to this conclusion, that in dealing with moral beings God always respects moral agency. By the truth as it is in Jesus He leads sinners to repentance; and by a thousand influences in providence He may excite interest in religion and prepare the mind for the reception of the truth of the gospel. Sometimes the sense of duty is awakened by the effects of sin; sometimes the conscience reproves and presents the eternal obligation of righteousness; sometimes the feelings are excited by bereavement, by affliction, by adversity; sometimes a strange combination of events sheds new light on the facts of time and eternity.¹

The Spirit of God employs such means to arrest attention; and as He is constantly watching the effects of all methods of persuasion, He is preparing out of all the experience of every individual new means of grace. We may not be conscious of the divine presence; but He is sustaining us in being. We may not see the divine love in sorrow and calamity; but He knows best what softens

¹ Vide *Contemporary Review*, p. 787.

the hard heart. He is seeking our good constantly. We may forget the changes of thought which prepare us to look to Jesus; but God never forgets. The divine consciousness is perfect as Omniscience.

It was reported by those who had the privilege of conversing with the Princess Alice, that "a complete change had passed over her mind. At first that terrible calamity which deprived her of her little son seemed to have produced only the 'sorrow of the world that worketh death;' but gradually it became, by God's mercy, the means of leading her to think, so that she finally came to seek and find peace in a firm faith in Jesus Christ, revealed in the Scripture of truth, as the only Saviour for sinners."¹

So often is sorrow sanctified, that we see those whom "the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The death of children and friends can be overruled for good. How many refer to bereavement in trying to explain the providential methods of Regeneration, preparatory to full surrender of heart and life to God! The sphere of human knowledge is very limited. But trust is discipline. "I would rather walk in the dark with God, than go

¹ *The Record*, December, 1878.

alone in the light ; I would rather walk with Him by faith, than go alone by sight."

The believer finds consolation in the fact that God knows all means and ends.

The choice of the free agent is carried out by forces of which the person acted upon is often unconscious. God pays regard to the deliberations and decisions in every mind. When man forgets what he selected, and the motives which induced him to choose one course of conduct, he does not by his forgetfulness alter the consequences of his choice. The boy may throw a stone into a lake and turn away, but the widening wave-circles go on observed or unobserved. In spiritual phenomena there are effects of many causes which cannot be traced. Some because they have not been observed, and some too complex to be followed. In Regeneration there may be conditions difficult to analyse ; but the methods illustrated by Scripture and experience may be ascertained. Sickness, adversity, death of friends, produce effects in the mind which prepare the soil for the seed of the word. But we cannot see how, without conscious thought, without belief of the truth, there can be Regeneration.

"I tender some caution," says Dr. Anderson,

“against such expressions as, that an acquaintance was converted by the death of his child, or some accident or disease which endangered the life of himself. Such things may have operated in the way of assisting his attention for the word, or making a certain kind of preparation for its reception ; but if he be genuinely converted, it was the truth of the word alone which produced the salutary change. Unless the lively impression, or sudden suggestion, or vivid dream, be of such a nature that you might have discovered the sentiment in the word at any time, in your waking hours and calmest mood of study, place no reliance on it. . . . That testimony contains the condition, ‘If thou believest, thou shalt be saved.’ Search thyself, therefore, of thy faith, and do not trust the dream.”¹

The normal order of mental activity is thought, feeling, choice ; right ideas excite good emotions, and prepare the mind to will God’s will. The importance of this order is recognised in Scripture, where it is plainly taught, that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he ;² and, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates

¹ *Regeneration*, pp. 112, 113.

² Prov. xxiii. 7.

therein day and night.¹ By storing the mind with the thoughts of God, feelings pleasing to Him will be excited, and conduct acceptable to Him will follow.

However, there is constant action and reaction going on in the mind. Whatever is on the side of good in conduct, feeling, or thought has a helpful influence on the whole; and whatever is on the side of evil has a hurtful influence on the whole.

“Errors in the life breed errors in the brain,
And these reciprocally those again.”

A dissolute life is a hotbed of doubts. Men doing the will of God know the truth. It is possible to undervalue the influence of good feelings. That they react upon thought and modify action is undeniable. But the condition of Regeneration enforced in Scripture is faith and not feeling. The intellect is the door of the soul, as well as the window. By enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ, by presenting correct thoughts of God's character and compassion for all sinners, the inmost rooms of the spirit are thrown open to divine light and love.

There is danger in forgetting the order

¹ Ps. i. 1, 2.

which puts intelligence first, and demands the acceptance of the truth. The Rev. S. Pearson says,—“In the best conducted revival services the *tendency* is to exalt the emotional at the expense of the judgment, the conscience, and the will. But those who watch for souls know what an important part the emotions play in the crisis of spiritual being. I know a man who was converted by hearing an audience sing about ‘the home over there.’ Another was converted in my chapel during a pause in Mr. Brownlow North’s preaching. I cannot account for these things; but so they are. Our care should be to pray God to help us to turn these feelings into spiritual facts. Men and churches will be better or worse when once the best emotions of their natures have been stirred. And our only test of blessing is to find whether hearts have been surrendered to Christ, and Christians consecrated to practical service.”¹

But the time when Regeneration takes place should be distinguished from the cause. The man who was converted during the singing of the hymn about heaven was probably too much moved to reflect upon the trains of thought passing through his mind. Probably

¹ *Congregationalist*, p. 209.

he was thinking of his own unfitness for heaven and of the way to heaven, of sin and righteousness, and thus led by the Holy Spirit to believe in Christ—the Lord our Righteousness.

One who is acquainted with the laws of association can imagine the road in which a mind has travelled when any station has been reached in certain circumstances. But the inference that by one road and no other would not be legitimate. However, it would be less correct to conclude that a change of thought had occurred in no way, when the fact implies that a person who was not a believer at one hour, knew himself to be a believer in Jesus—born again—converted—after a certain pause in a sermon, after a hymn was sung, after any event marking the time when the sinner knew himself in a state of condemnation, which state was left when, by faith in Jesus Christ, he entered the state of justification. The philosophy of the unconscious must take into account the rapidity of thought in certain excited states of mind, and the absorbing attraction which fixes attention on Jesus at the moment of conversion. But we may be quite sure that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation; and in some form the truth

has been apprehended by every one born again. Many persons who cannot tell *how* they were brought to the knowledge of the love of God in Christ can testify by a life of consistent conduct, that they do love the Saviour and seek daily to follow Him.

The following is the testimony of a minister who has listened to more than six hundred reports of conversations with persons applying for fellowship in an E.U. Congregational Church, in which every member professed to enjoy peace with God. But a small proportion were able to give an explicit account of conversion; and of those who could state the time when they were born again, there were not a few who fell away from public worship. There were many who were faithful to death, who had enjoyed the advantages of Christian training at home and in the schools of the church. The common experience of the children of Christian families was a gradual increase of light, a deepening sense of duty, a conviction of the need of standing out on the Lord's side, and a desire to work in connection with the church in which they had been educated. Many were able to speak of a time of increased interest in Christ.

The following examples, which have been

verified, may be regarded as illustrations of normal methods employed by the Spirit of God to bring men to the knowledge of the truth, so that they become born from above. Instances can be found similar to these in every Christian Church, in which by the preaching of the gospel, by conversation with friends in times of sickness and sorrow, by teaching in the Sabbath School, and by reading the Scriptures at home men and women have been born again.

H—— W—— an honourable man, a kind father, and a member of the U.P. Church for years, asked to be an elder but refused. H—— W—— became very unwell in the spring of 1877. A minister visited him, and as a relation spoke to him. Often he had wished to get through his reticence on spiritual matters. This time, to his surprise, H—— W—— drew out his Bible and asked for information, mentioning his difficulties. John i. 12, 13, was explained,—“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” The gospel was presented in many forms until the simplicity of it dawned on him. He said, “I see we have just to receive it *like a bairn*.” He was quite conscious of the

change of feeling toward God, and afraid it might not last. The minister called contrary to some plan of his own, but led by the Spirit of God, found H—— W—— softened with affliction, ready to receive the truth.

C—— G—— was brought up in connection with the Evangelical Union, had a godly mother who took him to the Trades Hall. C—— G—— years afterwards joined St. Jude's Episcopal Church. One Tuesday evening Mr. B—— was preaching there, from the text (Jer. xvii. 19), "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." C—— G—— saw himself as he had not before, surrendered self after a severe struggle, and gave himself to the Lord. He has since lived an active Christian life, working in connection with the Grove Street Institute, Glasgow.

H—— B—— her father not attending any church. H—— B—— was interested in religion and the love of Christ through the conversation of her friend in the mill. H—— B—— had two conversations with her minister, who was satisfied that she loved the Saviour, and sought to serve Christ.

D—— R—— was walking in the West End Park, Glasgow, in September, 1877, heard Dr.

F—— preaching in the open air, from the words (Ps. cxix. 9), “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way,” was convicted of sin; and afterwards, that evening, was led to the truth by conversation with a gentleman in a tent. D—— R—— was brought up in connection with the Free Church.

T—— H—— was in great perplexity and anxiety. He had godly parents, a good Sabbath School Teacher, and had been a regular hearer of the word. The minister pointed him to the Saviour, preaching the gospel to him in many forms, talking about Jesus for an hour or two, telling him to think of the love of God for him a sinner. T—— H—— saw the light after some days of thought, and has since enjoyed peace with God.

There are methods employed for bringing about Regeneration, which some would call sensational and some mechanical. The end which is desired is the “new-birth” of sinners who keep away from places of worship, and of nominal Christians, who attend to forms and little more. The means set to work to secure their attention may be posters, public-meetings, advertisements, intimations, and other methods of political agitation. These sensational agencies secure a hearing for the gospel

on the part of those who pay no heed to bells ringing in church towers. Novelties may serve this end; they excite attention and attract people who cannot readily be reached by ordinary methods of invitation.

Without condemning these agencies now associated with "revival services," it is important to distinguish between the mechanical and the spiritual. Men and women, boys and girls, may be "excited," "moved," "struck," and affected in a hundred ways without being "born from above." Emotions may be stirred by music, and no permanent blessing obtained by musical excitement. The magnetical power of a large meeting has great influence upon all in it. The instinct of imitation may be called out by good example as well as by bad. Momentary resolves to be good may bring about concurrence of opinion; and scores of hands may be held up as witnesses to the desire for Regeneration. Some impression has been made before this amount of interest is manifested; but unless this excitement is followed by the teaching of the truth there will be few persons truly born again.

Regeneration is a result which is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."¹ We

¹ Zech. iv. 6.

are not despisers of "the day of small things;" and we know that the seed of the word has the potency and the promise of many harvests of spiritual blessing. We grant freedom of action as we claim it. But our objection to the sensational methods of Regeneration is like our objection to the sacramental methods of Regeneration—the want of adaptation between the means employed and the end desired. It is not reasonable to expect men to be new creatures in Christ Jesus when they have not been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is not reasonable to expect a spiritual change, a change of thought, feeling, and choice of permanent value, from any ritual or any sensational means. The good which has resulted from revivals has been in proportion to the truth preached and the truth believed. For all who strive to break up the fallow-ground of indifference and formalism, and for all who sow the seed of the word in hearts prepared by the patient labours of pastors, and teachers, and evangelists, we have profound respect. But "justification by the feelings" is not the Scriptural doctrine of justification by faith. It cannot be denied that some preachers succeed in bringing hundreds to the Saviour. All may desire to

increase in skill as fishers of men. The secret of Mr. Moody's success points to the right method of Regeneration *by the word of God*. He "ever distinguished clearly between *the gospel for the sinner*—pardon and life on the condition of trust, on the ground of Christ's finished work—and *the law of the kingdom* for the sinner saved. Under his direction a sinner would look, be pardoned, and enter into rest; but being saved, would go on to a life of righteousness, grateful for the gift of eternal salvation. Under his guidance converts would work not *for salvation*, but *from* a salvation once for all accepted."¹

This is the testimony of the Rev. H. T. Robjohns, of Hull; and in this truth of Regeneration, not by works but by faith in the Saviour, we see why so many persons were born again under the faithful and fervent preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. iv. 15).

Some are in danger of limiting "the word of God" to a few texts; and others go to the opposite extreme, and bury the central truths of the Bible under a mass of historical details. The proportion of truth is most important; and the Bible method of division and illustration gives the best rule. The facts of the life

¹ *Congregationalist*, p. 205, March, 1879.

and death of Christ, historical and ethical truths, are all included in the context, where the Apostle Peter states the method of Regeneration and the conditions of this new-birth. He points to the purpose of God and to redemption by the precious blood of Christ. Writing to believers, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," he says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."¹

In the statements of truth in Scripture we can often trace the style of the writer. But the primary truths, historical and moral, are repeated in so many forms that there can be no difficulty in determining what is essential to salvation. The Apostle John says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments."²

¹ 1 Peter i. 22, 23.

² 1 John v. 1, 3.

The act of faith is one of the conditions of Regeneration. Men are not "born again" in order to believe, but men believing in Christ are born again, and their faith awakens love to God and man. This love is the fulfilment of the law, and therefore it is holiness—the condition of meetness for the society of the holy in heaven.

CHAPTER XI.

REGENERATION: METHODS SCRIPTURAL THEREFORE EVANGELICAL.

THE spiritual change which we call Regeneration is not peculiar to the Christian dispensation. The Old Testament saints were born again as they were saved by faith. Unrighteous persons are regenerated before they become sanctified, righteous. "The just shall live by faith." The new life and the new birth by which the spiritual life begins are both connected with faith. But the object of faith is always of more consequence than the act of faith. The latter is man's act; the former is God's gift. Without the grace of God the

tidings of salvation would not stir many hearts. But now this grace has been revealed in Jesus—so that men who look to Him pass from darkness to light, from condemnation to justification.

The two places in the New Testament where the Greek word *παλιγγενεσία* occurs are Matt. xix. 28, and Titus iii. 4-7. In both passages it is translated Regeneration. But in Matthew the word refers to the time when there shall be "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Moral order will be victorious in the Regeneration, in the second creation. By the renewal of the world paradise will be restored. In Titus the word refers to the beginning of moral order in the soul, to the beginning of sanctification, to the spiritual change which looked at from the forensic side is justification—from the spiritual side is Regeneration. The desire for sanctification expressed by the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me,"—is, we think, on the same line of metaphor as the washing of Regeneration.

The new birth precedes justification in the order of thought. And, it is important in considering the methods and conditions of Regeneration, to observe that every person

who is justified has been born again. Whatever may be the difference between justification and Regeneration there is much in common. The children of God are sons and daughters of a sinful race. As descendants of Adam and Eve they inherit tendencies to evil. Without God's help they cannot be saved. Sin is a fact. A gulf separated sinners from the Holy One. Christ made a way across, by dying "the just for the unjust." On the ground of the finished work of Christ men are justified, not by works of righteousness which they have done. So long as men take their own methods for saving themselves they are not born again. When they turn from self to God, when they change their thoughts of sin and perceive that it is no trifle that keeps them in condemnation, then they are likely to receive the Saviour. When they have believed on His name, when they have assurance of the forgiveness of sins through Christ, they are entitled to all the privileges of the children of God, to wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They have these blessings in Christ. They are incommunicable except through Christ. Those who have these blessings have been born again. Is not faith in Christ the condition of Regeneration, as truly as faith in

Christ is the condition of justification? Then the state of mind is the same. But does the new life not precede the new state? Regeneration is the process of spiritual evolution at the stage when the spirit enters into a new atmosphere of love and truth. Before this "vital air" was inhaled the man was not born again. But if Nicodemus believed the gospel which Christ preached, he was there and then born again, there and then justified. The new state of justification and the new life of Regeneration would begin at the same time.

These are consequents of faith in Jesus. If we strain the metaphors in the terms, we cause more perplexity. In justification we find some trace of the bar and the Judge. The legal process of accusation and acquittal on some ground is implied in the term justification. We are introduced by the word to a court, an advocate, a criminal, a judge. Men are found guilty of disobedience, but for the sake of Christ they are justified by His grace. If they were not guilty of sin, they would be justified by works; but confessing themselves to be sinners, if they are to be treated as righteous it can only be by mercy, by grace, on the ground of the work of Christ. That God is ready to accept of this plea is the gospel. Every sinner has a right

to say, Jesus died for me; for He is the propitiation not for our sins only, "but also for the sins of the whole world."¹ Therefore every sinner may be justified by faith. All who are justified are born again. As in Rome when Paul preached some believed, and some believed not, so is it still in every place where the gospel is preached. Therefore, some are born again and some continue unregenerate.

The order of time is important. Men are not regenerated *before* they believe, but when they have faith in Jesus as their Saviour, they are born again. There are often preparatory processes of thought, the origin and influence of which for good we attribute to the agency of the Holy Spirit. But the Bible gives no warrant to any one to delay decision for Christ for a single hour. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." The responsibility of receiving the blessings of redemption, provided by Christ for all, rests with the individuals. Regeneration is one of the blessings which Jesus has made possible to all. Forgiveness is enjoyed when the sinner believes in Christ, not previous to faith. The vital change called Regeneration is brought about through faith; not in order to belief of the

¹ 1 John ii. 2.

truth, but through the co-working of the Divine Being and the human being; through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thess. ii. 13-17).

Justification looks to the close of the career, although we may speak of an initial and final justification. God pardons the moment the sinner believes in Jesus, and at the last day He will confirm His good pleasure by public approval of all who are faithful unto death. The works of believers differing in amount and quality will be the ground of the degree of reward; but the title to heaven is the same for all—it is the atoning work of Christ—the ground of justification. It is to the beginning of the Christian career that Regeneration looks; and yet it is a pledge of eternal life. Once employed by the Saviour as a term to denote the times of restoration,¹ Regeneration always points to this second creation, when order shall be restored, when the chaos which resulted from sins shall have been overcome and Kosmos established by the grace of God.

In the third chapter of Titus the apostle is speaking of the means of grace employed for the conversion of men. The love of God our Saviour—the goodness and philanthropy,

¹ Matt. xix. 28.

the kindness and universal goodwill of God for mankind—forms the strongest motive to turn men from sin to righteousness. The philanthropy of God explains the salvation of man. Without this love in God, the source of mercy and salvation, we can give no adequate reason for the sacrifice of Christ. The manifestation of the kindness and philanthropy of God drew men to love God. It was the means of Regeneration and sanctification. Not the works of man, but the work of Christ opened a channel for the mercy of God to flow freely toward all mankind. "According to His mercy He saved us" (Titus iii. 5).

The only other place in the New Testament where the word *λουτρον*, *washing*, is employed is in Eph. v. 26. "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water *by the word*."¹ The truth is the means employed in sanctification, and the truth is the means employed in Regeneration. The phrase, *the washing* of Regeneration, is generally referred to water-baptism, but erroneously. It seems to us that to be of value for Regeneration, the washing must be *in the word*, in the truth of God. That can reach the soul, and it is by

¹ καθαρίσας τὸ λουτρὸν τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι.

the truth the Holy Ghost renews the heart. But washing the body with all the purest streams is still only an outward purification.

Before the coming of Christ there were purifying rites, sprinkling and pouring, symbols of purification. But the turn of the sentence in Titus iii. 6, points not to plunging but to pouring. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is *shed on us abundantly*; or, as Beza renders the words—"the Holy Ghost, *which He hath poured out on us copiously*."¹

The metaphor of pouring out, as from above, is the Scriptural symbol of the influence of the Holy Spirit descending. But like all metaphors it is only useful up to a point, namely, to present a vivid picture of a refreshing shower, a shower of blessing. In this gentle influence we may see a representation, without respect of person, of the universal work of the Holy Spirit. But there is a directing power, a personal influence which we ought not to forget. When He is accepted as the pilot of the soul He guides it into safety. But individuals reject Him.

The outward sign and the inward grace are mentioned in the last clauses of Titus iii. 5.

¹ Quem effudit super nos copiosè per Jesum Christum Servatorem nostrum.

The apostle in effect says—thus we were converted, we were baptized, we were sanctified.

The purifying influence of the Holy Ghost was the effectual cause of the change from the carnal state, described in verse third, to the spiritual state. But the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is in Scripture connected with the finished work of Christ. Every conversion takes place through the work of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, through the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour. The three persons of the Godhead are all concerned in the salvation of every sinner. It is God who saves, but man's free agency is always respected in the means employed.

CHAPTER XII.

REGENERATION: METHODS VITAL AND EVANGELICAL.

EXPLANATION of methods requires some knowledge of agents and means; for the nature of the latter will indicate the character of the process, moral or vital, mechanical or spiritual.

The Bible teaches that the Divine Spirit respects the moral nature of the human spirit in Regeneration, and that the means employed are not mechanical, but spiritual, vital. The adaptations of truth to the soul are pointed out; they are as real as the adaptations of seed to the soil. But the figures of speech indicate conjugal relations and vital processes.

The functions of the two agencies, divine and human, are indicated; and no better analogy can be found. What Archbishop Trench says of parables is true of these analogies which spring from the law of correspondence. "For it is a great misunderstanding of the matter to think of these as happily, but yet arbitrarily, chosen illustrations, taken with a skilful selection from the great stock and storehouse of unappropriated images; from whence it would have been possible that the same skill might have selected others as good, or nearly as good. Rather they belong to one another, the type and the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of a secret affinity. . . . Their power lies in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace between the natural and spiritual worlds,

so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations, happily but yet arbitrarily chosen. They are arguments, and may be alleged as witnesses; the world of nature being throughout a witness for the world of spirit, proceeding from the same hand, growing out of the same root, and being constituted for that very end.”¹

The reader will perceive the force of this in pondering the meaning of the Apostle James, when he speaks of Regeneration. The agency of God is recognised, and the freedom of man in the process is acknowledged in these words: —“Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”²

We infer from this that the first believers were begotten by the word of truth; and the

¹ *Notes on the Parables*, pp. 13, 14. ² James i. 18-22.

reason why so many are not regenerated is found in the fact that they resist the truth, and do not receive with meekness the word of God. They are careless hearers who will not give attention to the truth of the gospel. They close their minds; angry with themselves, irritated by the sense of condemnation which comes from the sight of the righteousness of God. They will not lay aside their naughtiness, their self-will; they prefer not to be saved. They will not be born again. They reject the saving power of God. They despise his sovereign grace. They turn from the love of God. They will not come unto Him that they may have life.¹

In all this opposition to God the will of man is respected. The free choice of evil is the ground of condemnation. God calls, but the sinner heeds not. God seeks to win affection, but the sinner will not be wooed to attention. The duty of being renewed, of being regenerated is taught in Scripture, and when all moral means have been tried in vain, God does not resort to mechanical force. He has the power to punish, for He claims the power to judge; but He does his best to per-

¹ Matt xxiii. 37.

suade. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; *and make you a new heart and a new spirit*: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: *wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*"¹

The moral agency of man is thus respected; and we think that Dr. Trench loses sight of the unlikeness of the spiritual birth to the natural, when he refers to Regeneration *without any power of our own*. He remarks that the *like* is also *likely* or probable. But logic teaches us to beware of forgetting the points of dissimilarity, when there are many points of resemblance. The Archbishop carries the analogy too far when he says:—"When Christ spoke to Nicodemus of a new birth, it was not merely because birth into this natural world was the most suitable figure that could be found for the expression of that spiritual act which, *without any power of our own*, is accomplished upon us when we are brought

¹ Ezek. xviii, 30-32.

into God's kingdom ; but all the circumstances of this natural birth had been pre-ordained to bear the burden of so great a mystery." ¹

It seems to us more important to observe how Christ, having aroused the attention of Nicodemus and persuaded him to look in the right direction, preached the gospel of God's love as clearly as it ever has been proclaimed, pointing to the unconditional gift of a Saviour for the world, and to salvation conditioned on faith. ²

The narrative of the conversation with Nicodemus plainly indicates that the human spirit has to be active in Regeneration, active in attending to the truth.

But we freely admit that the change called the new-birth is accomplished by processes over which we have no direct control after that we have received the truth. However, the Apostle Peter carefully recognises the part of the human agent as well as the Divine agent and instrument. To believers he writes,—"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently :

¹ *Notes on Parables*, p. 14.

² John iii. 16.

being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”¹

The means of Regeneration and the agencies employed are here stated. The result is placed before the cause and instrument. Purity, obedience, love, unselfish and unfeigned, are consequents of Regeneration, not the causes of it.

Theological distinctions, which ought to be helps to accuracy of thought, have sometimes occasioned mistakes. We have to separate one thing from another in thought in order to avoid confusion; but it is well to remember how many divisions are merely conventional, like the lines of latitude and longitude on maps. There are no lines on the blue vault of heaven, but astronomers have devised means of measuring spaces accurately by imagining lines, and drawing them on paper. So theologians divide. But this passage of Scripture requires a breadth of treatment peculiar to the Bible. Many things go together which ought to be distinguished, but not separated.

From the analogy of incorruptible seed we infer that Regeneration is a vital process, not

¹ 1 Peter i. 22-23.

a legal transaction like justification. Observe, in many vital changes there is much beyond our control. Think of the process of digestion, for the sake of illustration. Suppose a person has taken food,—has employed his judgment and his will to refuse poison and to select some bread and meat,—has masticated this food and swallowed it. He can directly do no more. The functions of the body, which are beyond his control, carry on the process of digestion and assimilation. Life is thus preserved, not by human agency alone, but by the vital process acting upon the results of human action. If he had refused to take food, then the pangs of hunger would have been part of the punishment of disobedience. If you, reader, have not yet received Christ, is it reasonable to expect you can be satisfied when you have refused the bread of life, the truth as it is in Jesus? But if you have experienced the change, the apostle instructs believers to recognise here that it is *through the Spirit ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.*

The analogy of the building up of the body, and of the renovation of the mind, is true both in the voluntary exercise of our powers in receiving what is adapted to renew,

and in the process which is carried on by an agency we call vital, but which we have to refer to Him who is omnipresent. The instrument which is employed in Regeneration is "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever;" this is "the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."¹ We receive this incorruptible seed before we are born again. We receive the truth before we are regenerated, just as we believe the truth before we are justified.

But justification is a legal process. It is an act of God in relation to His law and the sinner who is justified. Every vital process must go on in the structure of the living being. Within us, when we are the subjects of the change, this process of renewing and purifying through the Spirit is carried on. We call it Regeneration. But justification is without us, so to speak. We are accused, condemned, and yet justified. The right position for a sinner before God is that of confession. Accused by conscience he cannot truthfully plead not guilty. He can only expect separation from God if sentence is to be passed on the ground of his merits as a sinner. But the gospel is glad tidings for

¹ 1 Peter i. 23, 25.

sinners. By taking Christ as their advocate, and His atoning work as their plea, they are *made out righteous* for Christ's sake.

But love is both a duty and an effect of Regeneration. It is to be cherished in the soul. By the Holy Spirit sanctification is a process which goes on in the soul through the truth, by means of the constant endeavours of individuals to walk in the light, to comply with the commands of the Spirit.

Some German theologians speak of the inner crucifixion, of entering into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ through suffering. Von Meyer looks upon the doctrine of the cross as purifying the heart through suffering.¹ But the Apostle Peter speaks of the purifying of the heart through faith, by the Holy Ghost. The view of Reuss reconciles both statements. The sinner, when he beholds Christ as his Saviour, is so impressed with the sight that sin is hated; and this light is that of the Divine Spirit, often revealed, the Just One dying for the unjust. This crushes pride, the head of the serpent, and overcomes sin.

The Scripture teaches God's willingness to

¹ See Notes of Otto Zoekler, D.D., in his recent work *The Cross of Christ*.

save all, to lead every sinner to repentance. He has done all that He saw right to do. Men have resisted the Holy Ghost.¹

Accepting these statements as correct, we ask, is holiness a condition of Regeneration? Those who are holy have been born from above; but holiness is a consequent of Regeneration, not the cause or condition of the change. The necessity of Regeneration is plainly taught. Every sinner needs to be born from above.

Hindrances to Regeneration have been erected by unbelief and dislike to self-denial; by faith in the merits of good works, and dislike to humble acceptance of the righteousness of God.² Free choice of falsehood in the belief that a wrong statement is true will not remove the hindrances to Regeneration. There has to be on the human side enlightenment and concurrence; for faith, which is the human condition of Regeneration, implies knowledge of *the truth and obedience to it*. Christ is accepted as the Saviour of the soul by every one born again. But there is no true birth until the whole soul is surrendered to Christ. Head, heart, and hands are delivered

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Peter iii. 9; Isa. v. 4; Acts vii. 51.

² Gal. ii. 16, 17.

when the love of God in Christ is perceived as a truth revealed in the Bible, accepted as the word of God, and felt as the motive power—the vital principle of holiness.

Therefore the Apostle Paul in writing to the Galatians said, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;"¹ and to the Thessalonians, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."²

CHAPTER XIII.

REGENERATION—CONCLUSION: PRINCIPLES AND RESULTS.

THE efficient cause of Regeneration is the Divine Spirit. The instrumental cause is the gospel—the word of God. This truth is divinely adapted to human nature. It is not for one dispensation only, it is for all time.

¹ Gal. iii. 26.

² 1 Thes. ii. 13.

It may be represented under types and shadows, in many dispensations; it may be preached in a hundred languages, and illustrated by a thousand metaphors. But that which abideth for ever is the truth of divine love and sacrifice. This truth the Spirit employs to renew the divine nature in man. It creates new dispositions, new endeavours, new aspirations after glory and virtue. By the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, believers have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. They have been born from above.¹ They are the sons of God.²

In Regeneration both the Divine will and the human will are active. It is the harmony of the two which is the condition of union and of the higher life in man. The human spirit receives with meekness the engrafted word previous to Regeneration.³ The Divine Spirit employs the word of truth, as (He has willed to make the gospel) the means of Regeneration, of conversion. This word of truth is able (by the Divine decree) to save the soul. If we admit that God has so ordered the universe that there is a fitness in things,—certain adap-

¹ 2 Peter i. 1-8. ² Rom. viii. 14. ³ James i. 21.

tations perceived by every reasonable being,—why need we hesitate in affirming that the truth of the gospel has an intrinsic fitness for producing the change of thought, feeling, and purpose which we call Regeneration? We do not deny that without the Spirit of God words would be like tinkling cymbals. But the Spirit is never absent or inactive when His word is preached. He is with the hearer as well as with the preacher. The receiver of the message and the sender of the message *are so nigh* that spatial representations fail to mark the separation. God is striving with the sinner, and employing the spoken or printed word as the objective truth by which the controversy may be closed between the soul and God. If Jesus be received, if the gospel be accepted as true, then in the very nature of things the change is effected.

But there is no coercion. The human will has the liberty of refusing or accepting the Saviour. Even if the presentation of the truth be as bright as it was to Paul, there is the opportunity of obedience or disobedience. Paul “was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”¹ Is there any instance on record of the special influence of the Lord more striking

¹ Acts xxvi, 19.

than this which resulted in the conversion, the Regeneration of St. Paul? But the liberty of choice is implied in the fact that he was not disobedient. The word implanted was not cast out of the mind. The message was received in gentleness, not resisted with stubbornness. Whenever the truth as it is in Jesus is received in meekness, the renovation of the heart takes place by the power of God. This acceptance of Christ is not by compulsion, but by persuasion, by moral influence. The will is subdued by love, as the intellect is enlightened by truth. We do not forget that the Divine will is active in Regeneration, for God is the efficient cause. But whenever the conditions are fulfilled He wills to impart life,¹ namely, to all who accept Christ.² By the word of His power God upholdeth all things; by the word of His truth God reneweth all who believe.

In recognising the Divine will in Regeneration let us not disconnect that will from the attributes of love and light. The Fatherhood of God and the Sovereignty of God are expressions of divine love. Believers are children of God, who acknowledge that they are what they are by the free grace of God.

¹ James i. 18. ² John iii. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 4; Acts x. 34, 35.

By magnifying the importance of the human condition the divine cause may be overlooked. But "who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"¹

We cannot change our affections by mere will-power. We may resolve to love persons that we hate; but unless the object be seen in a new light, unless new thoughts alter the currents of feeling, there may be a change of behaviour through *will*, but there will be no change of feeling. A false report may be credited, and a friend regarded as a foe; but to have affection for him as a friend he must be believed to be not an enemy. We may love our enemies for Christ's sake.

Regeneration is the result of the power of God acting in the mind which has believed the truth. It is not then unconditional. Men are not born again in order to believe; but they believe the word of God before they are born again. It is not an effect of human power acting contrary to or apart from the Holy Spirit. It is the effect of compliance with the demands of Scripture, which claim faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, of whom the prophet said,—“The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify

¹ Prov. xx. 9.

the law, and make it honourable.”¹ Faith in the gospel implies some knowledge of the mind of God, of the sinfulness of man, and the righteousness and mercy of God revealed in Christ. The object of faith—“God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”²—is the saving influence which the Spirit employs in Regeneration. This is brought to bear upon the mind through the preaching of the gospel, through the glad tidings of salvation for the chief of sinners. The threatenings of the gospel-law may awaken fear and cause great distress of mind to those who are by the Spirit of God convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. These effects may be compared to the throes of the new-birth, the travail of soul before the spirit is born from above through belief of the truth. However, the anxiety, the darkness, the distress experienced by many before they have peace with God should be referred to the ignorance, the stubbornness, and unbelief of the sufferers. They resist the Spirit, and suffer in their resistance. *Now* is the time for salvation, and *now* is the time for Regeneration. We conclude then that Regeneration is not caused by the will of man, although it is not effected without the concurrence of man.

¹ Isa. xlii. 21.² 2 Cor. v. 19.

The moral principle of Regeneration may be inferred from the results. Those who are born again are to be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. They are to be devoted to the service of God, living sacrifices, living thankofferings. They are to devote themselves like the Macedonians, "who gave their own selves to the Lord."¹ Of all gifts man can bestow, God prizes the heart most. Money, time, houses or lands, flowers or fruit given to help the service of God, are valuable as expressions of gratitude, of a right state of thought and feeling toward God. He seeks not unreasonable service, or offerings which are not given with free will. They who are regenerated are a willing people, choosing the service of God, presenting all their powers of body and mind upon "the altar which sanctifieth the gift."² Believers rely on the merits of Christ. They do not magnify their own self-denial, but the sacrifice of Him who magnified the law.³ To them in the fact of their union with Christ, their faith is hidden out of sight. They do not look to it, but unto Jesus—the author and finisher of their faith.⁴ They distinguish subject and object. *"Thought like the sun irra-*

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 5.² Matt. xxiii. 19.³ 2 Thess. ii. 13.⁴ Heb. xii. 2.

diates all between." The light of truth reveals the Sun of Righteousness. The believer knows Jesus and says, "For me to live is Christ."¹ The conditions and methods of Regeneration meet in Jesus—the way, the truth, and the life.

Have we not a pledge and promise of the new creation in every one born again? Glorious harvests will spring from gospel-seed. All men will be Christ-like *in the Regeneration*.² Moral order is first restored in individuals; and the progress of the truth brings "the times of restitution"³ nearer day by day.

The conditions on the divine side are all ready. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."⁴

One by one men ought to comply with the conditions of Regeneration. Easier terms cannot be desired by those who wish to see moral order restored.

By various methods men may be led by the Spirit to know the hatefulness of sin and the beauty of holiness. But the knowledge of the truth, of salvation in Christ by the free grace

¹ Phil. i. 21. ² Ps. lxxxv. 8-13; Matt. xix. 28;

¹ John iii. 1-3. ³ Acts iii. 19-21. ⁴ Rev. xxii. 17.

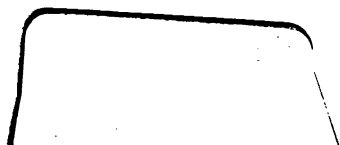
of God, is the divine method and condition of Regeneration. Every one born again is a triumph of Redeeming Love. Every one is born again who believes in Jesus.¹ "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

τελειωθείς ἐγένετο τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ πᾶσιν,
αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου.²

¹ John iii. 16. ² Heb. v. 9.







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